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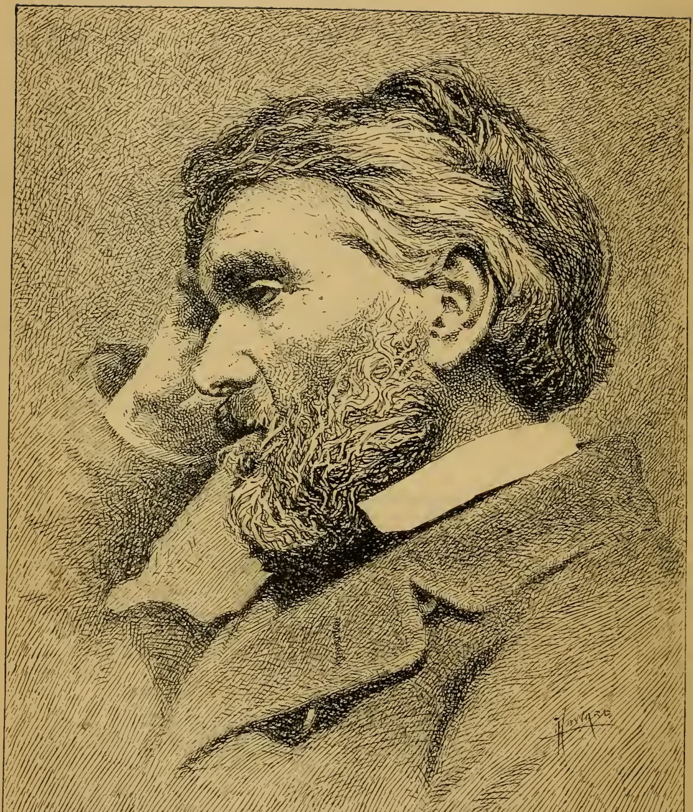

THOMAS CARLYLE.

# CARLYLE'S

# ESSAY ON BURNS

*EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,*

BY

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CARLYLE'S BIRTHPLACE, ECCLEFECHAN



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TO

E. CHARLTON BLACK,

This Edition of the Masterpiece of his

Distinguished Countryman

is inscribed

In Memory of the pleasantest of

Literary Friendships.

The only knowledge that can really make us better is not of *things* and their laws, but of *persons* and their thoughts; and I would rather have an hour's sympathy with one noble heart than read the law of gravitation through and through. To teach us what to love, and what to hate, whom to honor and whom to despise, is the substance of all training.

JAMES MARTINEAU.

# PREFACE.

'What is true at last will tell:
Few at first will place thee well;
Some too low would have thee shine,
Some too high — no fault of thine —
    Hold thine own, and work thy will!
Year will graze the heel of year,
But seldom comes the Poet here,
    And the Critic's rarer still.'

MATTHEW ARNOLD has taught us the true function of the critic, and has made it possible for us to value him at his real worth — a worth only second to that of the creators of our literature. 'I am bound,' he says, 'by my own definition of criticism: *a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.*' We become disinterested interpreters when we lay aside the personal estimate and the historical estimate, and seek the real estimate. 'The critical power,' he says, 'is of lower rank than the creative. True; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the highest function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well-doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it in interpreting.'

During the quarter of a century that followed the death of Burns the great creative impulse which began in the last half of the eighteenth century reached its height, and the intellectual life of the new generation had not been voiced. Byron, Shelley, and Keats, Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, had sung their *nunc dimittis*.

The event of the death of Burns was followed by an unusual activity on the part of a few whose function it was to be the chroniclers of small beer in the region of biography and criticism. An attempt was made to pluck out the heart of the mystery of Robert Burns; and while we may not question the motives of these writers, we have to deplore their singular unfitness for such a delicate task.

Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, in his introduction to the *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, says: 'The decade from 1820 to 1830 was a period of unusual dullness in English thought and imagination. But toward the end of this time a series of articles, mostly on German literature, appearing in the *Edinburgh* and in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, an essay on Burns, another on Voltaire, still more a paper entitled 'Characteristics,' displayed the hand of a master, and a spirit in full sympathy with the hitherto unexpressed tendencies and aspirations of its time, and capable of giving them expression. Here was a writer whose convictions were based upon principles, and whose words stood for realities.'

That Carlyle's first great work in literary criticism should be upon his brother Scot was natural and appropriate, in view of the influences of heredity and environment which played so important a part in developing the genius both of Burns and himself.

Carlyle was born and reared within a day's walk of Ayr and the 'auld clay biggin' in which Burns first saw the light. His early days, like those of Burns, were spent in a homely cottage built by the honest toil of the sturdy father and consecrated by the sacrifice and prayers of the devout mother. Like Burns, too, he was blessed by the ministrations of parents distinguished for intelligence, courage, thrift, industry, and deep religious conviction, —

> True to the kindred points of heaven and home.

It is but natural, therefore, that the finest traits of these fathers and mothers should appear intensified in these children of genius.

It is in these homes that we must seek for the origin of that subtle affinity by which the younger was able to interpret the mind and art of his distinguished countryman to the men of his generation.

Mr. Barrie says: 'A Scotch family are probably better acquainted with each other, and more ignorant of the life outside their circle, than any other family in the world. And as knowledge is sympathy, the affection existing between them is almost painful in its intensity; they have not more to give than their neighbors, but it is bestowed upon a few instead of being distributed among many; they are reputed niggardly, but for family affection at least they pay in gold. In this, I believe, we shall find the true explanation why Scotch literature, since long before the days of Burns, has been so often inspired by the domestic hearth, and has treated it with a passionate understanding.'

Let us glance at the occupants of these homes of rusticity, peace, and happy poverty, as they have been sketched for us by the children.

Burns says: 'My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where after many years of wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who understood men, their manners and their ways, equal to him. We were very poor; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and ill.

'He bade me act a manly part,
Though I had ne'er a farthing, O.'

The remainder of this description may be read in the *Cotter's Saturday Night.*'

Murdock, the teacher of Burns, describes the father and mother as follows: 'She is a patient, virtuous, industrious housewife, greatly devoted to her husband. The worthy woman had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him, for I myself have always considered William Burness as by far the best of the human race I had the pleasure of being acquainted with. He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner, and from her affectionate behaviour toward him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother. He spoke the English language with more propriety than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbors. In that two-roomed cottage, that tabernacle of clay, there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe.'

Carlyle says of his ancestors: 'They had to scramble, scraffle, for their very clothes and food. They knit, they thatched for hire, they hunted. My father tried all these things almost from boyhood. His hunting years were not useless to him. Misery was early training the rugged boy into a stoic, that one day he might be the assurance of a Scottish man. Ours was not a joyful life, yet a safe and quiet one; above most others, or any other I have witnessed, a wholesome one. We were taciturn rather than talkative, but if little was said, that little had generally a meaning.

'More remarkable man than my father I have never met in my journey through life; sterling sincerity in thought, word, and deed, most quiet, but capable of blazing into whirlwinds when needful, and such a flash of just insight and brief natural eloquence and emphasis, true to every feature fit as I have never known in any other. Humour of a most grim Scandinavian type he occasionally had; wit rarely or never — too serious for wit — my excellent mother with perhaps the deeper piety in most senses had also the most sport. No man of my day, or hardly any man, can have had better parents. None of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his. Never shall we again hear such speech as that was. The whole district knew of it. In anger he had no need of oaths; his words were like sharp arrows that smote into the very heart.'

William Burness upon his deathbed showed some signs that he was worried about the future of his children; and Robert, finding that he was the cause of this, burst into tears. In February, 1784, the poet writes: 'On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers. I cannot remember the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and ablest of instructors without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

> 'The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
> The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
> The friend of man, to vice alone a foe:
> For e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side.'

Carlyle writing to the family after his father's death says: 'None of us but started in life with *far* greater advantages than our dear father had; we will not weep for him, but we will go and do as he has done. Could I write my books as he built his houses, and walk my way so manfully through this shadow world, and leave it with so little blame, it were more than all my hopes. Neither are you, my beloved mother, to let your heart be heavy. Faithfully you toiled by his side, bearing and forbearing as you both could.'

While studying these Scots' homes it may not be amiss to glance into that humble cottage in Thrums where sits that devoted mother weaving her 'new clouty hearthrug,' while her young son is writing in the garret those sketches out of which one day is to be evolved *Auld Licht Idylls*. The weaving is interrupted now and then by a descent from the garret; for, says Mr. Barrie: 'When I had finished a chapter I bounded down-stairs to read it to her; and so short were the chapters, so ready was the pen, that I was back with a new manuscript before another clout had been added to the rug.'

In the beautiful biography of that mother he speaks of the mute blue eyes in which he had read all he knew and would ever care to write; 'when you looked into my mother's eyes you knew as if He had told you why God sent her into the world — it was to open the eyes of all who looked to beautiful thoughts, and that is the beginning and end of literature. . . . The reason my books deal with the past instead of with the life I myself have known is simply this, that I soon grow tired of writing tales unless I can see a little girl, of whom my mother has told me, wandering confidently through the pages. Such a grip has her memory of her girlhood had upon me since I was a boy of six. . . . So much of what is great in Scotland has sprung from the closeness of family ties.'

Soon after his marriage to Jane Welsh in 1825, Carlyle settled at Comely Bank, Edinburgh, where he first met Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*.

The meeting came about as follows: Barry Cornwall sent Carlyle a letter of introduction to the editor, whom he called 'a very fine fellow.' Armed with this letter, Carlyle went at once to George Street, where Jeffrey lived, and was shown into the study. 'Five pair of candles,' he tells us, 'were cheerfully burning, in the light of which sate my famous little gentleman; he laid aside his work, invited me to sit, and began talking in a perfectly human manner.'

Jeffrey soon returned the call, and was greatly delighted with Mrs. Carlyle. The friendship was happily begun; and, as a result, the next issue of the *Review* contained Carlyle's paper on Jean Paul. For some time Carlyle was a frequent contributor to its columns. When he removed to the wilds of Craigenputtock (Craig, the crag of the small hawks), 'a solitude almost Druidical,' 'Jeffrey's big carriage climbed the rugged hill roads,' says Carlyle, 'and I remember nothing so well as the consummate art with which my dear played the domestic field-marshal and spread out our exiguous resources without fuss or bustle.'

It was at Craigenputtock, 'while the premises were still littered with dirt, and in the wettest, warmest summer ever known,' that the *Essay on Burns* was written. 'Lockhart has written a kind of life of Burns,' writes Carlyle to his brother in 1828, 'and men in general are making another uproar about Burns.' In his diary is this note: 'Finished a paper on Burns, September 16th, 1828, at this Devil's Den, Craigenputtock.'

Jeffrey was surprised at the spirit and method of the essay, and said that it must be cut down one-half. He himself undertook to mitigate the intensity of its fervor, the diffuseness of its diction, and the exaggeration of its judgment. When Carlyle received the proof he found it only a torso; he became defiant at such tinkering, and insisted that it be published as he wrote it, or not at all. Jeffrey reluctantly descended from his throne; and so we have the work, 'saved as by fire,' substantially as it was written.

On the 25th of September Carlyle wrote Goethe: 'The only thing of any moment since I came hither [to Craigenputtock] is an *Essay on Burns*, for the next number of the *Edinburgh Review*. Perhaps you have never heard of this *Burns*; and yet he was a man of the most decisive genius, but born in the rank of a Peasant. We English, especially we Scotch, love Burns more than any other Poet we have had for centuries.' In April, 1830, Goethe wrote the Introduction to Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, in which, after quoting the above, he says: 'Yet Burns was better known to us than our friend conjectured. Those of his poems that we have made our own, convinced us of his extraordinary talent.' In order that the German people may know more of this Burns, he translates from line 20, p. 7, 'Born in an age,' to line 30; also from line 17, p. 9, 'But a true Poet,' to line 12, p. 12. 'And as we wish the Germans joy in their Schiller, so with the same feeling will we congratulate the Scotch. We esteem this highly praised Robert Burns amongst the first poetical spirits which the past century has produced.'

Goethe desired that Germany should return the compliment paid her by Carlyle in translating Schiller, and he found a translator for Burns; for he writes: 'A young man of much talent, and successful as a translator, is busy with Burns.'

The life and work of Carlyle fall into two periods. The first period, extending until 1834, when he settles in London, may be called a sort of *Preparatio Evangelica*. In it he wrote his great works in interpretation of literature; in it, too, his life was quickened and enriched by the friendship of two rare souls, — Goethe and Emerson. To understand what these friendships were to Carlyle, one must read *Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle*, covering a period of six years, until the death of Goethe; and *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, covering a period of forty years. Of the former he writes: 'I think Goethe the only living model of a great writer. It is one of my finest day-dreams to see him ere I die.'

Of Emerson's first visit to him he writes: 'He seemed to be one of the most lovable creatures in himself we had ever looked on. He stayed till next day with us and talked and heard talk to his heart's content, and left us all really sad to part with him. Jane says it is the first journey since Noah's Deluge undertaken to Craigenputtock for such a purpose. I found him one of the most simple and frank of men and became acquainted with him at once.'

The second period is that of *Sturm und Drang* — storm and stress — in which he wore himself out, body, mind, and soul, in the herculean task of cleansing the life and thought of his time from the sordid and the selfish. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and this was his cry: 'As the highest Gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man an indubitable Gospel, and preaches to the eye, and heart, and whole man, man is heaven-born — not the thrall of circumstances but the victorious subduer thereof.'

The mighty voice of Goethe had sounded a similar note: —

> Willst Du ins Unendliche Schreiten,
> Geh nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten.

Would you penetrate into the Infinite, then press on every side into the Finite.

A like note came from the calm and gracious Emerson, whom Matthew Arnold, in his noble tribute, calls 'the friend and aider of him who would live in the Spirit.'

'Trust thyself! Every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the Divine Providence has found for you. Great men have always done so and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age; betraying their perception that the Eternal was stirring at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being.'

These were the voices of which Arnold speaks in his essay on Emerson. He says: 'Forty years ago, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, voices were in the air there which haunt my memory still. Happy the man who in that susceptible season of youth hears such voices! They are a possession to him forever. . . . There was the puissant voice of Carlyle; so sorely strained, over-used, and misused since, but then fresh, comparatively sound, and reaching our hearts with true, pathetic eloquence. Who can forget the emotion of receiving in its first freshness such a sentence as that sentence of Carlyle upon Edward Irving, then just dead : "Scotland sent him forth a herculean man : our mad Babylon wore and wasted him with all her engines — and it took her twelve years!" A greater voice still — the greatest voice of the century — came to us in those youthful days through Carlyle : the voice of Goethe. And besides those voices, there came to us in that old Oxford time a voice also from this side of the Atlantic, — a clear and pure voice, which for my ear, at any rate, brought a strain as new, and moving, and unforgettable, as the strain of Carlyle or Goethe. . . . So well he spoke, that from that time forth Boston Bay and Concord were names invested to my ear with a sentiment akin to that which invests for me the names of Oxford and of Weimar, and snatches of Emerson's strain fixed themselves in my mind as imperishably as any of the eloquent words which I have been just now quoting.'

These voices are potent still to heal and cleanse.

It may be worth while to emphasize here some principles which should govern the handling of this Essay, and to protest against the custom of vivisection which prevails in our study of the masters in the art of literature. Remembering that the great interpreter of literature is only a single remove from the great creator of literature, we should read his work as we do a great poem, — in its unity and completeness. Not until we get some conception of the whole ought we to study the parts. Lowell says : 'Our prevailing style of criticism, which regards parts rather than wholes, which dwells on the beauty of passages, has done much to confirm us in our evil way.'

If the results of our study of literature be not to quicken our interest in the personality of the author and the subject of his work, it will be of little advantage educationally as a work of art, whatever information it may have provided. As 'that only is true enlargement of the mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as a whole, and of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system,' it follows that when the pupil becomes conscious that he is in communion with a great soul, he will desire to view in detail the various manifestations of personality as that personality reveals itself in language, symbols, color, and all the elements which an artist uses for creating an organic whole. 'Everything that a man undertakes to produce,' says Goethe, 'whether by action, word, or in whatsoever way, ought to spring from a union of all his faculties.'

I would plead for a method quite the reverse of the scientific. I would urge that great literature be used for its power to stimulate and quicken, not a single faculty merely, but all those powers which minister to complete selfhood. 'We must read, not for scholarship and specialized knowledge,' says Professor Dowden, 'but for life; we must read in order to live. If our study does not directly or indirectly enrich the life of man, it is but drawing of vanity with cart-ropes, a weariness to the flesh, or at least a busy idleness.'

Where poems of Burns are referred to by page, the allusion is to *The Select Poems of Robert Burns*, published by D. C. Heath & Co.

A. J. G.

BROOKLINE, MASS., *January*, 1897.

# INTRODUCTION.

'TAKING Carlyle all in all there never was a man — I at least never knew one — whose conduct in life would better bear the fiercest light which can be thrown upon it. In the grave matters of the law he walked for eighty years unblemished by a single moral spot. There are no "sins of youth" to be apologized for. In no instance did he ever deviate even for a moment from the strictest lines of integrity. He had his own way to make in life, and when he had chosen his profession, he had to depend on popularity for the bread which he was to eat. But although more than once he was in sight of starvation he would never do less than his very best. He never wrote an idle word, he never wrote or spoke any single sentence which he did not with his whole heart believe to be true.' J. A. FROUDE.

'You shall wear your crown at the Pan-Saxon Games with no equal or approaching competitor in sight, well earned by genius and exhaustive labor, and with nations for your pupils and praisers. I count it my eminent happiness to have been so nearly your contemporary, and your friend — permitted to detect by its rare light the new star almost before the Easterners had seen it, and to have found no disappointment, but joyful confirmation rather, in coming close to its orb.' EMERSON TO CARLYLE (1872).

'Carlyle's marvellous gift of language was really the very skin of his body—part of his mind—which he could no more put off than he could put off his Annandale accent.'

FREDERICK HARRISON.

'Carlyle was a great critic, and this at a time when our literary criticism was a scandal. He taught us there was no sort of finality, but only nonsense, in that kind of criticism which was content with laying down some foreign masterpiece with the observation that it was not suited for the English taste. He was, if not the first, almost the first critic, who pursued in his criticism the historical method and sought to make us understand what we were required to judge.' AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

'Wherever Carlyle is at home, and he seldom wanders from it, his weapon is like none other,—it is the very sword of Goliath. And this sword pierces to the joints and marrow as no other of the second division of our authors of the nineteenth century proper pierces, with the exception of that of Tennyson in verse. To speak on the best things in an original way is the privilege of the elect in literature; and none of those who were born within, or closely upon, the beginning of the century has had these gifts in English as have the authors of *The Lotus Eaters* and *Sartor Resartus*.' GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

'The ground-feeling of Carlyle is that of some old Puritan, preaching, like Baxter, as "a dying man to dying men." He belonged emphatically to the imaginative as distinguished from the speculative order of minds. He, therefore, must be judged as a poet, and not as a dealer in philosophic systems; as a seer or a prophet, not as a theorist, or a man of calculations.' LESLIE STEPHEN.

'Carlyle has surpassingly powerful qualities of expression, reminding one of the gifts of expression of the great poets — of even Shakspeare himself. What Emerson so admirably says of Carlyle's "devouring eyes, and pourtraying hand," "those thirsty eyes, those portrait-eating, portrait-painting eyes of thine, those fatal perceptions," is thoroughly true.' MATTHEW ARNOLD.

'Carlyle was essentially a great artist, both in the way in which he conceived things, and in the way in which he expressed his conception of them. An artist, not of the Raphael or Leonardo order, but of the Rembrandt, or even of the Michael Angelo type — forceful, rugged, gnarled, lurid, Titanic.' J. C. SHAIRP.

'Carlyle had to the full the prophet's insight into the power of parable and type, and the prophet's eye for the forces which move society, and inspire multitudes with contagious enthusiasm, whether for good or ill. He stands out a paradoxical figure, solitary, proud, defiant, vivid. No literary man in the nineteenth century is likely to stand out more distinctly than Thomas Carlyle, both for faults and genius, to the centuries which will follow.'

R. H. HUTTON.

'Carlyle's life of herculean labor was entirely given to letters, and he undoubtedly brought to his tasks the greatest single equipment of pure literary talent English prose has ever received. Not a perfect writer certainly, nor always an agreeable one; but he exhibited at all times the traits which the world has consented to call great. He bequeathed to mankind an enormous intellectual force and weight of character, embodied in enduring literary forms.'

JOHN BURROUGHS.

'Carlyle has taken up a mission: he is a prophet, the prophet of Sincerity. This sincerity or earnestness he would have applied everywhere; he makes it the law, the healthy and holy law, of art, of morals, of politics. His power is beyond dispute. Through all his oddities there appears the gift of evoking the past, of making it live, of making out of it a drama which cannot be seen without emotion.'

EDMUND SCHERER.

'After everything has been said that can be said in the way of criticism, we are forced to recognize that no English writer in this century has done more to elevate and purify our ideals of life, and to make us conscious that the things of the spirit are real, and that, in the last resort, there is on other reality.'

EDWARD CAIRD.

'His value as an inspirer and awakener cannot be overestimated. It is a power which belongs only to the highest order of minds, for it is none but a divine fire that can so kindle and irradiate. The debt due him from those who listened to his teachings of his prime for revealing to them what sublime reserves of power even the humblest may find in manliness, sincerity, and self-reliance, can be paid with nothing short of reverential gratitude. As a purifier of the sources whence our intellectual inspiration is drawn, his influence has been second only to that of Wordsworth, if even to his. Indeed he has been in no fanciful sense the continuator of Wordsworth's moral teaching.'

J. R. LOWELL.

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"CARLYLE'S genius was kin to that of the poet, and made its discoveries by wide, ranging glances and penetrative intuitions. He would not buttress his faith with formal argument; he would rather set forth his vision of things; and if defence were needed from a critical or sceptical world, his defence would be made in the skirmishing way of humor."

EDWARD DOWDEN.

# BURNS[1]

[1828]

In the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, 'ask for bread and receive a stone;' for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognize. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected: and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame; the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our

[1] Edinburgh Review, No. 96.—*The Life of Robert Burns.* By J. G. Lockhart, LL.B. Edinburgh, 1828.

literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers; and here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologize for this new attempt on such a subject: but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet; and this is probably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain, that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbor of John a Combe's, had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a Life of Shakspeare! What dissertations should we not have had, — not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher became a Player; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities! In like manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honorable Excise Commissioners, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr Writers, and the New and Old Light Clergy, whom he had to do with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

His former Biographers have done something, no doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronizing, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar and gentleman, should do such honor to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay it is not so much as that: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged. Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on the very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany*, it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious quotations than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and. as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, 'the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment.' But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

5 Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents, — though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession, — as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavors and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; and many *lives* will be written,

and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for.

6 Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the 'nine days' have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamor proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well-nigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his

had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain forever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with a pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his own irrepressible soul, he struggles forward into the general view; and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labor, a gift which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this that his darksome drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindliest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas! his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapors, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendor, enlightening the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colors, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business: we are not so sure of this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, 'amid the melancholy main,' presented to the reflecting mind such a 'spectacle of pity and fear' as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler, and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathizing loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the 'Eternal Melodies,' is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us; and we mourn his death as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature, in her bounty, bestowed on us in Robert Burns; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognized it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny, — for so in our ignorance we must speak, — his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature, and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The 'Daisy' falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that 'wee, cowering, timorous beastie,' cast forth, after all its provident pains, to 'thole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld.' The 'hoar visage' of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for 'it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind*.' A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just self-consciousness which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence, not for offence; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the 'insolence of condescension' cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms, and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was 'quick to learn;' a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; 'a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody.' And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarrelling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels! In such toils was that mighty Spirit sorrowfully wasted; and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor, mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness, — culture, leisure, true effort, nay, even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humor of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for, after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered, and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognized, — his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wire-drawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and labored amidst, that he describes; those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; 'in homely rustic jingle;' but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the discovery is easy enough: but the practical appliance is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in a hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both of these deficiencies combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry as in life! Great poets themselves are not always free of this vice; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success; he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. (7) Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet, if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt, and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humor, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last threescore and ten years. To our minds there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these otherwise so powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was, and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the simplest of all, — to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavor to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain high-flown inflated tone; the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakspeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing: this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-colored Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-colored Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, 'a sermon on the duty of staying at home.' Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men, — they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so, — they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favor, even from the highest. The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavors; its unspeakable aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had by his own strength kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance 'the elder dramatists,' and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man 'travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren.' But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues and all human vices; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practised honest self-examination? Truly, this same world may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's or the Tuileries itself.

But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago; inasmuch as poetry, about that date, vanished from the earth, and became no longer attainable by men! Such cobweb speculations have, now and then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there: the Shakspeare or the Burns, unconsciously and merely as he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it? It is not the material but the workman that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the *Wounded Hare* has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl: neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or Roman *Jubilee;* but nevertheless, *Superstition* and *Hypocrisy* and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire and genuine comic life. Let but the true poet be given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written; a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see that in this man there was the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardor of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his 'lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit.' And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact.

19 Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours): —

> When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
> *Sharp shivers* thro' the leafless bow'r,
> And Phœbus *gies a short-liv'd glowr*
> *Far south the lift,*
> *Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r*
> *Or whirling drift:*
>
> 'Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
> Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
> While burns *wi' snawy wreeths upchok'd*
> *Wild-eddying swhirl,*
> Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd
> Down headlong hurl.

Are there not 'descriptive touches' here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true likeness of every circumstance in it; saw, and not with the eye only. 'Poor labour locked in sweet sleep;' the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: this is of the heart as well as of the eye! — Look also at his image of a thaw, and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig*: —

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's *mossy* fountains *boil*,
Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,
Or haunted Garpal[1] draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds and *spotting* thowes,
*In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;*
*While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,*
*Sweeps dams and mills and brigs a' to the gate;*
And from Glenbuck down to the Rottonkey,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;
Then down ye'll hurl, Deil nor ye never rise!
And *dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.*

The last line is in itself a Poussin-picture of that Deluge! The welkin has, as it were, bent down with its weight; the 'gumlie jaups' and the 'pouring skies' are mingled together; it is a world of rain and ruin. — In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *Farmer's* commendation of his *Auld Mare*, in plough or in cart, may vie with Homer's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam's Chariot. Nor

[1] *Fabulosus* Hydaspes!

have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-wind* and his brawny customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink:* but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs*. It gives, in a single line, to the saddest feeling the saddest environment and local habitation: —

> *The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,*
> *And Time is setting wi' me, O;*
> Farewell, false friends! false lover, farewell!
> I'll nae mair trouble them nor thee, O.

This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself, perhaps, a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary power. Homer surpasses all men in this quality: but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample and lovingly exact; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigor and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of 'a gentleman that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God.' Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward '*red-wat-shod:*' in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art!

In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigor of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, and in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise: 'All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.' But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts that exist in the Poet are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest objects; never saw Philosophy; never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof sufficient, remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength; and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and 'the highest,' it has been said, 'cannot be expressed in words.' We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, 'wonders,' in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the 'doctrine of association.' We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here, for instance :—

'We know nothing,' thus writes he, 'or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities; a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.'

Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent; except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character, neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling, that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper, with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards all nature, that inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that 'love furthers knowledge;' but, above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his sight: 'the hoary hawthorn,' the 'troop of gray plover,' the 'solitary curlew,' all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the 'ourie cattle' and 'silly sheep,' and their sufferings in the pitiless storm!

I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' wintry war,
Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
And close thy ee?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its 'ragged roof and chinky wall,' has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy; for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy: —

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben;
O, wad ye tak a thought and men'!
Ye aiblins might, — I dinna ken, —
Still hae a stake;
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Even for your sake!

'*He* is the father of curses and lies,' said Dr. Slop, 'and is cursed and damned already.' 'I am sorry for it,' quoth my uncle Toby! — a Poet without Love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.

But has it not been said, in contradiction to this principle, that 'indignation makes verses?' It has been so said, and is true enough; but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an inverted Love; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary feeling, and without its opposite, ever produced much Poetry; otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the most musical of all our choristers. Johnson said he loved a good hater; by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently as one that hated wisely, hated baseness from love of nobleness. However, in spite of Johnson's paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or unwise; nay, that a 'good' hater is still a desideratum in this world. The Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns has also given us specimens, and among the best that were ever given. Who will forget his *Dweller in yon Dungeon dark*, a piece that might have been chanted by the Furies of Æschylus? The secrets of the infernal Pit are laid bare; a boundless, baleful 'darkness visible;' and streaks of hellfire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom!

> Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
> Hangman of Creation, mark!
> Who in widow's weeds appears,

Laden with unhonored years,
Noosing with care a bursting purse,
Baited with many a deadly curse!

26 Why should we speak of *Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, since all know of it, from the king to the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback, in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forbore to speak, — judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns; but to the external ear it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

27 Another wild, stormful Song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Farewell*. Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that co-operates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy Northland Cacus, that 'lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie,' — was not he too one of the Nimrods and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given him? A fibre of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy

and despair which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange, half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

*Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,*
*Sae dauntingly gaed he:*
*He play'd a spring, and danced it round,*
*Below the gallows-tree.*

Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognized as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humor. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full, buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is drollery rather than Humor: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him, and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a Humor as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar, — the Humor of Burns.

Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much more might be said; but now, with these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of his individual Writings, adequately and with any detail, would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems: they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter* itself, which enjoys so high a favor, does not appear to us at all decisively to come under this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new-modelling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will forever live, though silent now, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-colored spectrum painted on ale-vapors, and the Farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more 'Shakspearean' qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces; nay we incline to believe that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

30 Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his 'poems' is one which does not appear in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*. The subject truly is among the lowest in Nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*, are Scottish, yet ideal; the scene is at once a dream, and the very Ragcastle of 'Poosie-Nansie.' Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem. The blanket of the Night is drawn

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asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the action, without effort; the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldiering; their 'brats and callets' are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humor, warm life and accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers, for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggars' Opera*, in the *Beggars' Bush*, as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigor, equals this *Cantata;* nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

31 But by far the most finished, complete and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty and pure sunny clearness. The reason may be, that Song is a brief simple species of

composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we have songs enough 'by persons of quality;' we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rhymed speech 'in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop,' rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from endeavoring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul;* not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debatable-land on the outskirts of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated.

With the Songs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and as it were drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his Plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The Songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or slyest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, 'sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear.' If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven;* from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart, — it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. 'Let me make the songs of a people,' said he, 'and you shall make its laws.' Surely, if ever any Poet might have equalled himself with Legislators on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-colored joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo;* the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalizations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception: not so Johnson; the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas.*

35 But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect: unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man.* Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic: Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country: however, it was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our 'fervid genius,' there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are

sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay of any human affection whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy: that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable Structure of social and moral Life, which Mind has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briers, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briers nor roses; but only a flat, continuous thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the 'Doctrine of Rent' to the 'Natural History of Religion,' are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

36 With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathizing in all our attachments, humors and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. (But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects,) could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: 'a tide of Scottish prejudice,' as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, 'had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would boil there till the flood-gates shut in eternal rest.' It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his coun-

try, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him, — that of Scottish Song; and how eagerly he entered on it, how devotedly he labored there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy-valley of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end: —

. . . A wish (I mind its power),
A wish, that to my latest hour
Will strongly heave my breast, —
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.

The rough bur Thistle spreading wide
  Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
  And spared the symbol dear.

37 But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, L. which has already detained us too long. Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, are his acted ones: the Life he willed and was fated to lead among his fellow-men. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this, too, alas, was but a fragment!

The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to his Life, the sum and result of all his endeavors, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay was mistaken, and altogether marred.

58 Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth: for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character; in his thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes: glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet

cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to him; he must dream and struggle about a certain 'Rock of Independence:' which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money than others; of his standing at a higher or at a lower altitude in general estimation than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed colors: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honor, pecuniary ease. He would be happy, not actively and in himself, but passively and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labor, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope and remorseful disappointment: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path; and to the last cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

39 We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favor. This blessing is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develop it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from within: no 'pre-established harmony' existed between the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that the adjustment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood; but at best, and only a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

40 By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate. His father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and, what is far better and rarer, openminded

for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made: in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor; had he been even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of British Literature, — for it lay in him to have done this! But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained a hard-worked ploughboy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words '*Let us worship God*,' are heard there from a 'priest-like father;' if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a 'little band of brethren.' Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humor of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-colored splendor and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

> in glory and in joy,
> Behind his plough, upon the mountain side.

We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world; more so even than he ever afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to yield to them, and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's-service, 16 but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world: that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any 17 way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free. Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanaticism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurers than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts at some period of his history; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed: but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by 'passions raging like demons' from within, he had little need of sceptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer presides there; but wild Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guiltiness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost; men and Fortune are leagued for his hurt; 'hungry Ruin has him in the wind.' He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exile from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the 'gloomy night is gathering fast,' in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland: —

> Farewell, my friends; farewell, my foes!
> My peace with these, my love with those:
> The bursting tears my heart declare;
> Adieu, my native banks of Ayr!

Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honor, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as 'a mockery king,' set there by favor, transiently and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head: but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point: —

'It needs no effort of imagination,' says he, 'to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction, that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon-mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble, — nay, to tremble visibly, — beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves.'

The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us: details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker's personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative: a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious:

'As for Burns,' writes Sir Walter, 'I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786–7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner; but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side, — on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptized in tears."

'Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's called by the unpromising title of "The Justice of Peace." I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

'His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture: but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i.e.* none of your modern agriculturists who keep laborers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

'I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

'This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this. — I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since.'

46 The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favor; the calm, unaffected, manly manner in which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigor and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not

a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this: it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt forever between two opinions, two objects; making hampered advancement towards either. But so is it with many men: 'we long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price;' and so stand chaffering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over!

The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock, whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay poorer; for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question for the wisest. It was a question too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalized at his ever resolving to *gauge;* and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of

Patronage stirred the waters, that so, with one friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be healed. Unwise counsellors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in his scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he 'did not intend to borrow honor from any profession.' We reckon that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe. from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.

Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a-year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was the treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see and have at hand. Had the 'patrons of genius,' who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old: and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists,[1] all manner of fashionable danglers after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mæcenases, hovered round him in his retreat; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice;

[1] There is one little sketch by certain 'English gentlemen' of this class, which, though adopted in Currie's Narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary: 'On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox-skin on his head, a loose greatcoat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns.' Now, we rather think, it was *not* Burns. For, to say nothing of the fox-skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watchcoat with the belt, what are we to make of this 'enormous Highland broad-sword' depending from him? More especially, as there is no word of parish constables on the outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own midriff or that of the public! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and the least tendency, to seek for distinction, either in his own eyes, or those of others, by such poor mummeries.

and his warm social nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a little good; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighborhood; and Burns had no retreat but to 'the Rock of Independence,' which is but an air-castle after all, that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately by contempt of others, and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it forever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

Amid the vapors of unwise enjoyment, of bootless remorse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true load-star, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate. his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel: and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance, — in fits of wild false joy when such offered, and of black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast the first stone at him! For is he not a well-wisher to the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them. Nay his convivial Mæcenases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierdom, had actually seen dishonor in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut* him! We find one passage in this Work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts:

'A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman dismounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said: "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now;" and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

> "His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
> His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new
> But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
> And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing.
>
> O, were we young as we ance hae been,
> We sud hae been gallopping down on yon green,
> And linking it ower the lily-white lea!
> *And werena my heart light, I wad die*."

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived.'

Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps 'where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart'[1] and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentle-

[1] *Ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit.* Swift's Epitaph.

men already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down, — who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! 'If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!' Some brief pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labor itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt too, that with all the 'thoughtless follies' that had 'laid him low,' the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a-day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts forever.

We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it: and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was open for him: and he passed, not softly yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion, which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men in any rank of society, could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or 18 both. But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer expected, or recognized as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced 'Patronage,' that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be 'twice cursed;' cursing him that gives, and him that takes! And thus, in regard to outward matters also, it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern Honor; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder: we may question whether, without great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shakspeare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns; or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only a *fence* and haws? How, indeed, could the 'nobility and gentry of his native land' hold out any help to this 'Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country'? Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough interests to strengthen; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate?

Less than adequate, in general; few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of them were poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as with thumbscrews, from the hard hand; and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might, are all melted or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's merely selfish endeavors are fated to do: and here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise.* Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, 'Love one another, bear one another's burdens,' given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life, we shall still find; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless* is not the least wretched, but the most.

Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more rather than with less kindness than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favor to its Teachers: hunger and nakedness, perils and revilings, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dungeons; Tasso pines in the cell of a mad-house; Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so 'persecuted they the Prophets,' not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

Where, then, does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons; for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

We have already stated the error of Burns; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly, and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular Versemonger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness and triviality, when true Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavoring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, without reconciling them.

Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavor to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding* sheltering himself in a Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his ease when he composed *Paradise Lost?* Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor, but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare?

And what, then, had these men, which Burns wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single, not a double aim in their activity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers; but seekers and worshippers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom, in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause they neither shrank from suffering, nor called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the 'golden-calf of Self-love,' however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated and made subservient; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks; but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing.

Part of this superiority these men owed to their age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in: but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns, again, it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, 'a great Perhaps.'

He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to seem, 'independent;' but it *was* necessary for him to be at one with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature highest also in his life; to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external events would forever refuse him.' He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the soul of his whole endeavors. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect and all evil, save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter to him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity. Nay, we question whether for his culture as a Poet poverty and much suffering for a season were not absolutely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. 'I would not for much,' says Jean Paul, 'that I had been born richer.' And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: 'The prisoner's allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter.' But the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, 'the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage.'

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness; but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly 'respectability.' We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honors, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might, like nim, have 'purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan;' for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now — we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which ere long will fill itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth; they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this divine behest lay smouldering within them, for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant Truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship will they live there; they are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history, — *twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep, impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, — that of being the Poet of his Age, — to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: 21 "He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem." If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories nor its fearful perils are fit for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him worship and be-sing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him, — if, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them, and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favor of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favor and furtherance for literature, like the costliest flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he can-

99 – Formal [illegible]



not be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted! Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in the harness of a Dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay, from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome, nay, the circle of a gin-horse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the gin-horse and that of the planet will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful; but, to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl fishers on their waves, this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye; for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!

# CHRONOLOGICAL.

1795. Born at Ecclefechan, Annandale, Dumfriesshire.

1800. At the Village School.

1806–1809. At the Grammar School, Annan.

1809. Enters Edinburgh University.

1814, 1815. Teacher of Mathematics at Annan.

1816–1818. Master at Kirkcaldy; Friendship with Edward Irving.

1818–1820. At Edinburgh; Divinity and Law; Writes First Articles for Brewster's *Encyclopædia;* Begins the Study of German Literature.

1821. His "New Birth;" Visits Haddington with Irving; Meets Miss Jane Welsh.

1822. Tutor to the Bullers; Writes *Life of Schiller* for the *London Magazine.*

1824. Translates *Wilhelm Meister:* First Visit to London with the Bullers; Meets Coleridge at Highgate; Visits Paris; Correspondence with Goethe begun.

1825. At Home, Hoddam Hill.

1826. Marries Jane Welsh, and settles at Comely Bank, Edinburgh; Meets Jeffrey; Writes *Jean Paul* for the *Edinburgh Review.*

1827–1831. Removes to the Welshes' Manor, Craigenputtock; *Essay on Burns* in the *Edinburgh Review:* Contributes Magazine Articles now published under *Miscellanies;* Writes *Sartor Resartus.*

1831. Removes to London; His Father's Death.

1832, 1833. Returns to Craigenputtock; Visit from Emerson; *Sartor Resartus* published in *Fraser's Magazine;* Winter in Edinburgh.

1834. Settles at Cheyne Row (Chelsea), London.

1837. Lectures in London on German Literature; *The French Revolution.*

1839. *Chartism.*

1841. Lectures in London on Heroes; *Heroes and Hero Worship* published.

1843. *Past and Present.*

1845. *Cromwell.*

1850. *Latter-Day Pamphlets.*

1851. *Life of Sterling.*

1858–1865. *History of Frederick the Second.*

1866. Elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University; Address on the Choice of Books; Death of Mrs. Carlyle.

1874. Order of Merit from the German Emperor.

1875. *The Early Kings of Norway.*

1881. Death; *Reminiscences*, J. A. Froude, Ed.

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1882. *Thomas Carlyle.* J. A. Froude.

1883. *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle.* J. A. Froude.

1883. *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson.* C. E. Norton, Ed.

1886. *Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle.* C. E. Norton, Ed.

1887. *Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle.* C. E. Norton, Ed.

# GROUP OF CARLYLE'S FRIENDS.

Francis Jeffrey.
Professor David Masson.
Edward Irving.
John Sterling.
Leigh Hunt.
Walter Savage Landor.
John Stuart Mill.
Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.
Alfred Tennyson.
John Ruskin.
J. A. Froude.
R. W. Emerson.
Goethe.
John Forster.
Arthur Hugh Clough.
Edward Fitzgerald.
Charles Dickens.
John Tyndall.
Henry Taylor.
Thomas Arnold.
Bishop Thirlwall.
Robert Browning.
C. E. Norton.

# NOTES.

The student should be familiar with the life of Carlyle and that of Burns, as given in the English Men of Letters, the Great Writers, and the Famous Scots Series. He should also read the poems of Burns in some edition which gives them in chronological order and with notes: Scott Douglas's Edinburgh edition, or that of D. C. Heath & Co., Boston. Carlyle's *Hero as Poet* and *Hero as Man of Letters*, Stevenson's *Famous Reviews*, or L. E. Gates's *Essays of Jeffrey* will furnish interesting side-lights.

**1.** 1–3. **It is no uncommon thing,** etc. Since the time of Burns, notable instances of tardy recognition are seen in the case of Scott, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Carlyle himself. "Each in his day," says Mr. Edward Dowden, "has stood in the stocks, and every fool has been free to throw a cabbage-stump or a rotten egg at the convicted culprit." Cf. E. Dowden, *Transcripts and Studies*, "The Interpretation of Literature."

In 1835 Carlyle wrote to his brother: "Your letters, my dear Jack, are always a great comfort to me. My friends here admit cheerfully that I am a very heroic man that must understand the art, unknown to them, *of living upon nothing*. As to the *heroism* (bless the mark!), I think often of the old rhyme:

"There was a piper had a cow,
And he had naught to give her;
He took his pipes and played a spring,
And bade the cow consider.
The cow considered wi' hersel'
That piping ne'er would fill her;
'Gie me a peck o' oaten strae,
And sell your wind for siller.'"

"Genius is a great disturber," says Coventry Patmore. "It is always a new thing, and demands of old things that they should make a place for it, which cannot be done without more or less inconvenient rearrangements; and as it seems to threaten even worse trouble than it is finally found to give, it is generally hated and resisted on its first appearance."

"Poets perish in penury, and prophets are turned into martyrs; but God takes care that his innocent ones shall not go unavenged, for after they die they are canonized." — GEORGE DAWSON.

Cf. Tennyson, *The Dead Prophet.*

**Like Butler** (*2*). It was but natural that this satire upon the Puritans should be popular with King Charles, yet Butler was allowed to die in poverty. Butler's *Hudibras* was one of the books that interested Carlyle in his youth. Cf. Masson, *Edinburgh Sketches and Memories*, "Carlyle's Edinburgh Life."

13–19. **but his short life,** etc. Burns alludes to the toil and hardship of his early life as "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave." Yet if we read the poems of the same period, we find them expressions of the joy of loving. Cf. *Handsome Nell*, p. 1, *My Nannie O*, p. 5, and *Mary Morison*, p. 7.

If his last years were spent in penury, they, too, were lighted up with the ministrations of love. Cf. *Altho' Thou Maun Never Be Mine*, p. 227, and *O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast*, p. 228, tributes to the lass, Jessy Lewars, who attended him in his last illness.

The street where he died is now called Burns Street, and the town has many memorials of the poet. In the churchyard of St. Michael's stands the mausoleum, over the vault in which rest the bones of Burns, Jean Armour, and some of their children.

> "'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
> Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
> Beside you, and lie down at night by you
> Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
> And all at once they leave you, and you know them."

Witness the multiplication of biographies, memorials, and editions of the poet's works since 1828; especially in this centenary year, 1896, when artists, poets, press, and pulpit vie with each other in doing him honor.

In October, 1830, Carlyle wrote Goethe: "Burns was of Schiller's age; in the second year of that fair Weimar Union he perished miserably, deserted and disgraced, in that same Dumfries where they have erected mausoleums over him, now that it is all unavailing, and would buy a scrap of his handwriting as if it were Bank-paper."

In his *Reminiscences*, Carlyle says: "Burns had an infinitely wider education, my father a far wholesomer. Besides, the one was a man of musical utterance; the other wholly a man of action."

**2.** 2. **sixth narrative.** See the Bibliography, in Blackie's *Life of Burns* (Great Writers), for the five works here alluded to; works which

> "Needs must scan him from head to feet
> Were it but for a wart or a mole."

8–12. **The character of Burns,** etc. "Great men, great events, great epochs, it has been said, grow as we recede from them; and the rate at which they grow in the estimation of men is in some sort a measure of their greatness. Tried by this standard, Burns must be great indeed, for during the years that have passed since his death, men's interest in the man himself and their estimate of his genius have been steadily increasing." — J. C. SHAIRP.

20–29. **Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's,** etc. Tradition connects Shakespeare with Sir Thomas Lucy through a deer-stealing frolic in Charlecote Park. When Sir Thomas threatened arrest for the poaching, Shakespeare nailed the following lampoon to the park gate:

> "He thinks himself greate,
> Yet an asse in his state
> We allowe by his eares but with asses to mate."

It is held by some that Sir Thomas was the prototype of Justice Shallow in *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

If one wishes to see what a hold this tradition of deer-stealing has, even at Charlecote, one should take a ramble from Stratford through the meadows to the park, where he will find a pair of 'tumble down bars' made in imitation of those which the poet broke down when making his exit with the deer on his back.

Cf. Washington Irving, *Sketch Book*, "Stratford-on-Avon."

William Winter, *Shakespeare's England*.

Landor, *Imaginary Conversations*, "Examination of Shakespeare."

**John-a-Combe** (*21*). The history of John-a-Combe is interesting as related to Stratford and to Shakespeare.

Sir Hugh Clopton, Knight, Lord Mayor of London in the reign of Henry VII., built the beautiful bridge over the Avon, — now known as Clopton Bridge, — and he gave the church of Holy Trinity. The clergy resided in a stately college-building not far from the church. After the Reformation it reverted to the Crown, and was sold, in 1575, to John-a-Combe, a rich usurer, and collector of the rents of the Earl of Warwick in the manor of Stratford. Here he lived until his death in 1614. He must have been a man of parts to have attracted the poet as he did; for when Shakespeare returned to Stratford, tradition says they were together every evening, either at their own homes, or at the old tavern, where they played shovel-board, and indulged their wits. On these occasions Shakespeare used to compose epitaphs on his friends, and we have the following on John-a-Combe:

> "Ten in a hundred lies here engrav'd;
> 'Tis hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd:
> If any man ask, 'Who lies in this tomb?'
> 'Oh! ho!' quoth the Devil, ''tis my John-a-Combe.'"

This epitaph did not displease John, for when he died he left Shakespeare five pounds as a token of affection.

29. **In like manner**, etc. Read *Burns*, by Shairp, Blackie, or Setoun, for history of these characters; also *Holy Willie's Prayer*,

p. 28; *Address to the Unco Guid*, p. 32; *The Deil's awa' wi' the Excise Man*, p. 194; and the notes to each.

**3.** 13. **His former Biographers,** etc. Cf. Bibliography, in *Burns* (Great Writers). Jeffrey's review of Crowell's *Reliques of Robert Burns*, in 1808, will give an excellent idea of the kind of criticism then prevailing. After alluding to "the harshness and acrimony of Burns's invective, his want of polish in his gallantry, his contempt for prudence, his cant of careless feeling, and his vulgarity," Jeffrey very condescendingly remarks: "With the allowances and exceptions we have now stated, we think Burns entitled to the rank of a great and original genius."

"There are two canons of criticism to which I have fixed my allegiance: that it is always better to show mankind the things which are to be imitated, rather than the things which are to be avoided; and since the moral quality is present in everything, whether as morality or immorality, penetrating all subjects and everything that can be imagined, no work of art should have any avowed and fixed moral. Those principles are imitated in the writings of Dr. Watson. He has himself told you that it is impossible to analyze a spiritual fact. We all know that his race are noble in their influence, that they have exerted a noble influence upon society. We do not know the secret of his charm. I cannot tell it to you. I wish I could. I think perhaps it is that same inaccessible magic which I find in *King Lear*, which I find in the death speech of Brutus:

'Night hangs upon mine eyes: my bones would rest,
That have but labour'd to attain this hour.'

. . . . . . . . .

'This day I breathed first: time is come round, and where
I did begin there shall I end.'

I find it in Robert Burns." — WILLIAM WINTER.

(Address at the dinner given to Ian Maclaren, New York, Dec. 4, 1896.)

**4.** 21. **Constable's Miscellany.** Mr. Archibald Constable was a famous Edinburgh publisher who gave to the world Scott's early works.

25–27. **Mr. Lockhart's own writing,** etc. Cf. Mr. Andrew Lang's magnum opus, *Biography of Lockhart.*

In 1838 Lockhart wrote to Haydon, as to his early performances in *Blackwood:* "In the first place, I was a raw boy who had never had the least connection either with politics or controversies of any kind, when, arriving at Edinburgh in 1817, I found my friend John Wilson (ten years my senior) busied in helping Blackwood out of a scrape he had got into with some editors of his magazine; and on Wilson's asking me to try my hand at some squibberies in his aid, I sat down to do so with as little malice as if the assigned subject had been the Court of Pekin."

31. **Mr. Morris Birkbeck.** Author of *Notes on a Journey in America* (1818).

**5.** 13–30. **Our notions,** etc. When Carlyle wrote these lines he little thought that at no distant day the world would be interested to know in regard to him the very things which he here affirms it should know in regard to Burns.

In 1843 he began to have fears that the indiscreet biographer was in search of him, for he writes: "The world has no business with my life; the world will never know my life, if it should write and read a hundred biographies of me." Again in 1848: "Darwin said to Jane the other day, 'Who will write Carlyle's life?' The word reported to me set me thinking how *impossible* it was, and would ever remain, for any creature to write my life. . . . I would say to my biographer, if any fool undertook such a task, 'Forbear, poor fool! Let no life of me be written; let me and my bewildered wrestlings lie buried here, and be forgotten swiftly of all the world.'"

Later, when he found that this wish of his could not be honored, he reluctantly requested Mr. James Anthony Froude to use all the materials possible to make a true likeness of him. It is to Froude's four volumes that we must go for the revelation of those influences which made Carlyle what he was, — the greatest man of letters of the century.

Carlyle here insists upon that philosophical criticism of which Coleridge gave such a splendid illustration in his *Biographia Literaria* when he reviewed Wordsworth's *Prefaces*. Until this time English criticism had been devoid of love and reverence; it was now to illustrate Wordsworth's principle:

> "You must love him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love."

Cf. Arnold's "Sainte-Beuve," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition.

6. 10. **Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy.** Cf. Burns's poem, *There Was a Lad*, p. 98. Burns here represents the wiseacres gathered about his cradle in the "auld clay biggin," reading his destiny:

> "Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
> Was five and twenty days begun,
> 'Twas then a blast o' Janwar win'
> Blew hansel in on Robin."

Again, in *My Father Was a Farmer*, he says:

> "No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to befriend me, O;
> So I must toil, and sweat and broil, and labor to sustain me, O;
> To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early, O;
> For one, he said, to labor bred, was a match for fortune, fairly, O."

26, 27. **He did much,** etc. The earliest note in Burns's poetry was the *personal;* his first poems were poems of love. Then the note became *national* by his making the Lowland Scotch a "Doric dialect of fame." "The only example in history," says Emerson, "of a language made classic by the genius of a single man." The final note was the *universal*. Through him Scotland's hills and vales, her woods and streams, her men and women, became the property of the race.

"We love him, praise him just for this;
In every form and feature,
Through wealth and want, through woe and bliss,
He saw his fellow-creature."

**7.** 4, 5. **without instruction, without model.** This statement is likely to mislead one. With the *Spectator*, Pope, Shakespeare, Ramsay, Ferguson, Thomson, Macpherson's *Ossian*, which Burns calls "glorious models," and that book of books, — the Bible, which was in every Scot's home, — we can hardly say he was "without model." Then, too, his home was charged with the rapture and religion of popular song. These songs, which came to him from his mother as she rocked his cradle, from old Jenny Wilson who beguiled his youth, touched every fibre of his nature, and kindled his lyric genius.

Professor Minto says: "Burns's poetry drew its inspiration from literature, and it became in its turn a faithful source of inspiration to two great poets of the next generation, — Wordsworth and Byron."

Jeffrey says: "Burns was not himself uneducated nor illiterate; and was placed in a situation more favorable, perhaps, to the development of great poetical talents, than any other which could have been assigned him."

20. **Born in an age the most prosaic.** Alluding to the fact that Gray '*never spoke out*,' Arnold says: "The eighteenth century was an age of prose and reason; spiritual east winds were blowing, and Gray, with the qualities of mind and soul of a genuine poet, was isolated." What caused this blighting of the buds of promise?

26, 27. **rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay.** Carlyle hardly gives to these men the credit which is their due. When Burns went to Edinburgh, in 1787, his first act was to pay homage to the memory of these men. He visited Canongate churchyard, and finding no memorial at the grave of Ferguson, whose *Farmer's Ingle* had suggested to him the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, he asked permission to erect a simple stone over the "revered ashes." The request was granted, and upon the stone was inscribed these lines:

> "No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,
> 'No storied urn nor animated bust;'
> This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
> To pour her sorrows o'er her Poet's dust."

Cf. *Inscription on the Tombstone*, p. 145.

He also found the shop of Allan Ramsay, and reverently entered. Cf. *Epistle to John Lapraik*, p. 38, xiv.:

> "O for a spunk o' Allan's glee,
> Or Ferguson's, the bauld an' slee."

Cf. *Poem on Pastoral Poetry*, p. 228, v., vi.:

> "In this braw age o' wit and lear,
> Will nane the shepherd's whistle mair
> Blaw sweetly in its native air
> And rural grace;
> And wi' the far-fam'd Grecian share
> A rival place?
>
> Yes! there is ane; a Scottish callan —
> There's ane; come forrit, honest Allan!
> Thou need na jouk behint the hallan,
> A chiel sa clever;
> The teeth o' Time may gnaw Tantallon,
> But thou's forever."

"Whoever puts Ferguson right with fame," says Robert Louis Stevenson, "cannot do better than dedicate his labor to the memory of Burns, who will be the best delighted of the dead."

**8.** 11–19. **Alas! his sun shone,** etc. Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, in his essay on *English Verse*, says: "Prose, when it rises into poetry, becomes as nearly musical as language without metre can be; it becomes rhythmical." This passage is an excellent illustration of the rhythm to be found in many places in

Carlyle's writings. "Those of us who are old enough," says Shairp, "cannot but look back — so strange it seems — to the time when Carlyle's light first dawned on the literary world, a wonder and a bewilderment. We knew that he had a way of looking at things which was altogether new, that his words penetrated and stirred us as no other words did." Again, comparing Carlyle's style with that of Newman, Shairp says: "Carlyle's style is like the full untutored swing of a giant's arm. Cardinal Newman's is the assured self-possession, the quiet gracefulness, of the finished athlete." Cf. J. C. Shairp, *Aspects of Poetry*. "Prose Poets;" (Carlyle).

28, 29. **it is not chiefly as a poet,** etc. "Burns had a passionate faith in God and man. He sinned, but he believed. He was not a good man, but he was a very real one. Like David, though a sinner, he was a preacher, and not merely a literary artist." — E. CHARLTON BLACK.

> "He came when poets had forgot
> How rich and strange the human lot;
> How warm the tints of life; how hot
> Are Love and Hate;
> And what makes Truth divine, and what
> Makes manhood great."
>
> WILLIAM WATSON.

**9.** 17–24. **But a true Poet,** etc. Cf. Emerson, *The Poet* (Essays, Second Series).

> "Olympian bards who sung
> Divine ideas below,
> Which always find us young,
> And always keep us so."

Cf. Wordsworth, *A Poet's Epitaph;* Tennyson, *The Poet, The Poet's Mind;* Burns. *A Bard's Epitaph*, p. 103.

**10.** 7–11. **and so kind and warm a soul,** etc. "No poet ever more deeply felt the sorrows of created things than Burns." — STOPFORD BROOKE.

Cf. *A Winter Night*, p. 94, iii.:

> "List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle,
> I thought me of the ourie cattle
> Or silly sheep."

11. **The "Daisy."** Cf. *To a Mountain Daisy*, p. 113.

13. **'wee, cowering, timorous beastie.'** Cf. *To a Mouse*, p. 68.

15. **winter.** Cf. *Winter — A Dirge*, p. 8.

Burns, in a note to this poem, says: "Winter is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to 'Him who walks on the wings of the wind.'"

22–26. **But observe him,** etc. Cf. *Epistle to Davie*, p. 15; *Epistle to John Lapraik*, p. 38; *To William Simpson*, p. 43; *To Dr. Blacklock*, p. 166; *To Mr. Cunningham*, p. 225; *Handsome Nell*, p. 1; *My Nannie O*, p. 5; *Mary Morison*, p. 7, etc.

28–31. **The rough scenes of Scottish life,** etc. Cf. *Halloween*, p. 59; *The Twa Dogs*, p. 105; *To James Smith*, p. 51, v.:

> "Some rhyme, a neebor's name to lash;
> Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
> Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
> An' raise a din;
> For me, an aim I never fash;
> I rhyme for fun."

**11.** 13–25. **he is cast among the low,** etc.

> "But who his human heart has laid
> To Nature's bosom nearer?
> Who sweetened toil like him, or paid
> To love a tribute dearer?"
>
> WHITTIER.

"To homely subjects Burns communicated the rich commentary of his nature; they were all steeped in Burns; and they interest us not in themselves, but because they have been passed through the spirit of so genuine and vigorous a man." — ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

"Burns was one of the people, and he spoke for the people. He broke the pathetic silence of the toiling multitudes with a voice so sweet and strong and true that it rang into every heart that longs for freedom, and into every home where freedom is dear." — E. CHARLTON BLACK.

25–29. **It is moving to see how,** etc. Dr. Hale, in his address at the Burns Centenary, Boston, July 21, 1896, after alluding to the injury some of Burns's friendships were to him, sounded a very helpful note when he said: "To all mankind this is to be said, — that such men as Robert Burns, if they are to help us, deserve that we should help them; that we should neither tempt nor flatter them."

Carlyle, in his letter to Goethe, October, 1830, wrote: "How different was his [Schiller's] fate from that of our poor Burns, blest with an equal talent, as high a spirit, but smitten with a far heavier curse, and to whom no guiding Friend, warmly as his heart could love, and still long for wisdom, was ever given! One such as you might have saved him, and nothing else could; but only the vain, the idle, the dissipated, gathered round him."

30. **'Quick to learn,'** etc. Cf. *A Bard's Epitaph*, p. 103; Wordsworth, *At the Grave of Burns*.

**12.** 6–9. **And this was he,** etc. Burns was appointed to the Excise in 1788. Cf. *To Dr. Blacklock*, p. 166, iv.:

> "But what d'ye think, my trusty fier,
> I'm turn'd a gauger — Peace be here!
> Parnassian queens, I fear, I fear,
> Ye'll now disdain me!"

13–22. **All that remains of Burns,** etc. "In Burns's poems is to be read clearly the lyric chronicle of all that went to make up the most moving tale of Robert Burns, which is surely to be read, if at all, only with sympathy and tears." — ERNEST RHYS.

25–27. **To try by the strict rules,** etc. Burns's poems are a most excellent illustration of William Morris's conception of Art: The expression of one's delight in what he is doing; a joy to the maker and the user.

30. **Some sort of enduring quality,** etc. "In homely Scot's vernacular we are told by an Ayrshire ploughman authentic tidings of living instincts, of spontaneous belief, which not all the philosophy in the brain of the intellectual can banish from the breast of the human being." — ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

Cf. Lowell, *Incident in a Railroad Car.*

> "He spoke of Burns — men rude and rough
> Pressed round to hear the praise of one
> Whose heart was made of manly, simple stuff
> As homespun as their own."

Cf. Whittier, *Burns.*

**13.** 18, 19. **his sincerity, his indisputable air of Truth.** "He was utterly incapable of anything like baseness; no man could be more jealous of honor; no man had a greater pride in being largely and loftily a man." — J. S. BLACKIE.

Cf. *For a' That and a' That*, p. 220.

"Sincerity, indeed," says Edwin Gosse, "is the first gift in literature, and perhaps the most uncommon." It is sincerity which is the characteristic quality of Burns as well as of Carlyle. It never occurred to either of them to be other than himself. A little flattery at the proper time would have saved both of these men a deal of trouble; but posterity would not now be praising them as it is if they had succumbed to the tempter. They are two indiscreet Scots who "spoke out."

**14.** 6–9. **Horace's rule,** etc.

> "If you would move me to tears
> You must yourself have seen sorrow."

This law is splendidly illustrated in the modern Scotch Idyl, as seen in the works of Barrie, Crockett, and Maclaren, — *A*

*Window in Thrums*, *The Stickit Minister*, and *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.*

**15.** 9–16. **Byron, for instance, was no common man,** etc. Edmond Scherer, the French critic, says of Byron: "He has treated hardly any subject but one, — himself: now the man in Byron is of a nature even less sincere than the poet. He posed all his life long."

Cf. Arnold, "Essays in Criticism," *Byron ;* also his estimate of Burns in *The Study of Poetry.*

**16.** 12–20. **We recollect no poet,** etc. This is the secret of Burns's influence with the people. That he is the idol of Scotland few who have had the privilege of knowing the Scotch people will venture to gainsay.

In speàking of Burns's honesty and frankness, Charles Kingsley says:

"It has been with the workingmen who read him a passport for the rest of his writings; it has allured them to listen to him when he spoke of high and holy things, while they would have turned with a distrustful sneer from the sermon of the sleek and comfortable minister."

"Only those books are for the making of men into which a man has gone in the making. Mere professional skill and sleight of hand, of themselves, are to be appraised as lightly in letters as in war or government, or any kind of leadership. Strong native qualities only avail in the long run; and the more these dominate over the artificial endowments, the more we are refreshed and enlarged." — JOHN BURROUGHS.

Burns, in alluding to his father's teaching, says:

> "He bade me act a manly part,
> Though I had ne'er a farthing, O,
> For without an honest, manly heart
> No man was worth regarding, O."

25–31. **Certain of his Letters,** etc. Although Burns is known chiefly by his verse, his prose is interesting for many reasons;

but chiefly for its content, — the light which it throws upon his life, and habits of poetic composition. What interests us in its form is the fact that it reveals imitation rather than creation. He deliberately set about being a good prose-writer, and failed because of this very consciousness of effort. His verse is characterized by spontaneity and grace; his prose too often by affectation and dress. He says: "I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pondered over them most devoutly." In his Tarbolton days he piqued himself on his ability to write a *billet doux*.

**17.** 23, 24. **His Letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.** Mrs. Dunlop became the friend of Burns through reading *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. After it had been published, 1786, the edition which contained it came into Mrs. Dunlop's hands through a friend. This poem so affected her that she despatched a messenger to Mossgiel, a distance of fifteen miles, with a letter to Burns, asking him to send her a dozen copies, and also inviting him to her house as soon as it was convenient for him to come. This friendship lasted, and richly blessed the poet, throughout his life. Almost the last thing he did before his death was to write to her. Mrs. Dunlop showed this poem to her housekeeper, who wondered that her mistress cared to entertain one so unknown as was Burns, and the old lady returned it, saying, "Gentlemen and ladies may think muckle of this; but for me, it's naething but what I saw i' my faither's hoose every day, an' I dinna see hoo he could hae tell't it ony ither way."

"He threw over the poor," says Stopford Brooke, "the light of God. Every one knows the scene in *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* every one has felt how solemn and patriarchal it is."

27–30. **This displays itself in his choice of subjects.** Wordsworth says:

"He showed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth."

*At the Grave of Burns.*

"Song drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick Nature's hem, and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew."

WILLIAM WATSON.

"Give lettered pomp to teeth of time,
So 'Bonnie Doon' but tarry;
Blot out the epic's stately rhyme,
But spare his Highland 'Mary.'"

WHITTIER.

**18.** 7, 8. **Rose-colored Novels and iron-mailed Epics.** Who were the popular writers of this time?

29, 30. **what passed in God's world,** etc. Cf. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy*, and Maclaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.*

**19.** 5–10. **The poet,** etc. The Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement. . . . Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. — WORDSWORTH.

"The Poet does not feel differently from other men, he feels more." — J. C. SHAIRP.

"For, Ah! so much he has to do;
Be painter and musician too!
The aspect of the moment show,
The feeling of the moment know!
The aspect, not I grant, express
Clear as the painter's art can dress;
The feeling, not I grant, explore
So deep as the musician's lore —
But clear as words can make revealing,
And deep as words can follow feeling.

But, Ah ! then comes his sorest spell
Of toil — he must life's *movement* tell ! "

ARNOLD.

18–21. **Is there not the fifth act,** etc.

" Riding one day with William Laidlaw," says W. Robertson Nicoll, " Sir Walter Scott talked of the sensation in Paris over *Quentin Durward*, and proposed to write a German novel. Laidlaw remonstrated, and urged him to draw from Melrose, the village below them, and lay the scene in that very year. Scott's air became graver and graver ; and he at length said : ' Ay, ay, if one could look into the heart of that little cluster of cottages, no fear that you would find materials enow for tragedy as well as comedy. I undertake to say that there is some real romance at this moment going on there, that, if it could have justice done to it, would be well worth all the fiction that was ever spun out of human brains.' "

We have the following incident of Burns's first visit to Edinburgh from Dugald Stewart : " He walked with me to the Braid Hills early in the morning ; and he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which they contained."

Cf. J. M. Barrie, *A Window in Thrums*, chap. vi., Dead this Twenty Years ; *Margaret Ogilvy*, chap. i., How my Mother got her Soft Face ; Ian Maclaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, Doctor's Last Journey.

22, 23. **that Laughter must no longer shake his sides.**

" Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek ;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides."

MILTON, *L'Allegro.*

27. **He is a vates, a seer.** "Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet. . . . The Greeks called him ποιητής, which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages." — SIDNEY, *Defence of Poesy.*

"A Poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one." — SHELLEY, *Defence of Poetry.*

"The swallow stopt as he hunted the bee,
The snake slipt under a spray,
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
And stared, with his foot on the prey,
And the nightingale thought, 'I have sung many songs,
But never a one so gay,
For he sings of what the world will be
When the years have died away.'"
TENNYSON, *The Poet's Song.*

"Can rules or tutors educate
The semigod whom we await?
He must be musical,
Tremulous, impressional,
Alive to gentle influence
Of landscape and of sky,
And tender to the spirit touch
Of man's or maiden's eye:
But, to his native centre fast,
Shall into Future fuse the Past,
And the world's flowing fates in his own mould recast."
EMERSON.

"Who but the Poet was it that first formed Gods for us; that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us?" — GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meister.*

31. **Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet,** etc. Mr. Ernest Rhys, in objecting to the opinion of Arnold that Burns was not a classic, says: "Not a classic? Then the term

can avail us little, I imagine, in lyrical poetry. If passion, fancy, wit, imagination, irresistibly musical, set to the lyric note by a born master of words, cannot procure that praise, then the lyric art must exist for other ends, and the term be confined to the schools."

Cf. Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, II. The Study of Poetry (Burns).

**20.** 3. **Minerva Press.** The press prolific in multiplying sensational story, until Scott took the field.

22–27. **The mysterious workmanship,** etc. Cf. Wordsworth, *Michael ;* Tennyson, *Dora.*

**21.** 1. **may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton,** etc. Burns says : " I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of the courts of Europe."

When twenty-one years of age, Burns founded the famous Tarbolton Bachelors' Club. The following is from the preamble which Burns himself wrote : —

" Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford ;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In nature's simple dress record."

Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson says of this period in Burns's life : " Gallantry was the essence of life among the Ayrshire hills as well as in the court of Versailles ; and the days were distinguished from each other by love-letters, meetings, tiffs, reconciliations."

" In all this," says Andrew Lang, " Burns is the true representative of every Scot who *is* a Scot, and of his nation."

**Crockford's.** A famous gambling-place in St. James Street, London.

5–8. **for it is hinted,** etc. Macaulay asserts that " as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines." It has been feared, also, that the advance of science would cause poetry to be less appreciated, and consequently little would be produced.

Of all the modern poets, Tennyson and Browning best illustrate what Wordsworth prophesied in 1803, — that poetry and science would walk peacefully together. Wordsworth had defined poetry as "the impassioned *expression* which is in the countenance of all science;" and he had said that the poet would carry "sensation into the midst of the objects of Science itself."

18–21. **A Scottish peasant's life,** etc. Cf. A. J. George, *Select Poems of Robert Burns*. Preface.

The Scotch people are worshippers of Burns; and a pilgrimage to the *Land of Burns* will be made interesting and instructive by the frequent memorials, and the zeal with which his countrymen vie with each other in doing justice to their darling poet. Monuments are erected at Ayr, Kilmarnock, Edinburgh, Dumfries, Dundee, Glasgow, and Aberdeen.

"Since the time of Burns," says Stopford Brooke, "our poetry has not only been the poetry of man and of nature, but also of passion. And it sprang clean and clear out of the natural soil of a wild heath, not out of a cultivated garden."

22, 23. **Wounded Hare.** Cf. *On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp by Me*, p. 161.

Burns writes: "One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighboring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when all of them have young ones."

Burns cursed the man, and at the same time threatened to throw him into the Nith.

Cunningham says that he once met the man, Thomson, who was the unhappy subject of this poem. He alluded to Burns's threat; and "I asked," says Cunningham, "'Could he hae done it?' — 'Could he hae done it!' exclaimed he with wonder; 'deil a doubt but that he could hae done it; he was mair than a match for most men.'"

25. **Our Halloween.** Cf. *Halloween*, p. 59.

One of the quaintest and most characteristic of the old Scottish festivals is that of Halloween, the vigil of All Saints' Day, Oct. 31.

Nothing could reveal so clearly as does this poem the nature of the peasantry of the west of Scotland as it manifests itself on the night so prophetic with charm and spell, so ominous with its forebodings, so fateful in its witchery.

> "Of a' the festivals we hear,
> Frae Han'sel Munday till New Year,
> There's few in Scotland held mair dear,
> For mirth I ween,
> Or yet can boast o' better cheer,
> Than Halloween."

27. **but no Theocritus.** Cf. *Poem on Pastoral Poetry*, p. 228.

> "But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
> They're no herd's ballats, Marco's catches;
> Squire Pope but busks his skinklin patches
> O' heathen tatters:
> I pass by hunders, nameless wretches,
> That ape their betters.
>
> In this braw age o' wit and lear,
> Will nane the Shepherd's whistle mair
> Blaw sweetly in its native air
> And rural grace;
> And wi' the far-fam'd Grecian share
> A rival place?"

29. **Holy Fair.** This poem is one of the series in which Burns satirizes the church of his day. It is not so interesting as the *Address to the Unco' Guid*, p. 32; or *Holy Willie's Prayer*, p. 28. Burns was —

> "Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love."

He had said, —

"My name is Fun, your crony dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
And this is Superstition here,
And that's Hypocrisy."

The introductory stanza to *The Holy Fair* is: —

"*A robe of seeming truth and trust*
*Hid crafty Observation;*
*And secret hung, with poison'd crust,*
*The dirk of Defamation:*
*A mask that like the gorget show'd,*
*Dye-varying on the pigeon;*
*And for a mantle large and broad*
*He wrapt him in Religion.*"
Hypocrisy à-la-mode.

The first stanza of the poem is in Burns's best style: —

"Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
And snuff the caller air.
The risin' sun owre Galston muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin;
The hares were hirplin down the furrs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin
Fu' sweet that day."

Alluding to the preaching, he says (xxii.): —

"A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou' o' lowin brunstane,
Wha's ragin flame, an scorchin heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin,
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neebor snorin
Asleep that day."

**Council of Trent or Roman Jubilee.** Cf. *Century Cyclopedia of Names.*

**22.** 15–19. **We see that in this man there was the gentleness,** etc.

> "Then gently scan your brother Man,
>   Still gentler sister Woman;
> Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
>   To step aside is human:
> One point must still be greatly dark,
>   The moving *Why* they do it;
> And just as lamely can ye mark,
>   How far perhaps they rue it."
>
> *Address to the Unco' Guid.*

**23.** 4–9. **No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns.** Cf. *See the Smoking Bowl Before Us*, p. 58. Mr. Arnold says: "It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's cellar, of Goethe's *Faust*, seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes."

"So powerful, so commanding, is the movement of that beggars' chorus," says Lang, "that methinks it unconsciously echoed in ths brain of our greatest living poet when he conceived the *Vision of Sin.* You shall judge for yourself.

> 'Drink to lofty hopes that cool, —
>   Visions of a perfect State;
> Drink we, last, the public fool,
>   Frantic love and frantic hate.
>
> Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
>   While we keep a little breath!
> Drink to heavy Ignorance!
>   Hob-and-nob with brother Death!'"

10, 11. **the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive.** Of this German outline draughtsman, Ruskin says: "We cannot but attribute to him a very real gift of making visibly terrible such legends as that of the ballad of Leonora, and interpreting with a wild aspect of veracity the passages of sorcery in *Faust.*" — *The Art of England.*

Carlyle has made equally terrible many of the scenes of the French Revolution.

17. **Winter Night.** Cf. *A Winter Night*, p. 94.

28. **bock'd.** Gushed.

**24.** 1–2. **saw, and not with the eye only.** Cf. Wordsworth: —

"An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor."

*Prelude* ii., 368–370.

"And add the gleam,
The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the Poet's dream."

*Peele Castle.*

"From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won."

*An Evening of Extraordinary Splendor and Beauty.*

Cf. Tennyson, *Far-Far-Away:* —

"A whisper from this dawn of life; a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death
Far-far-away."

2. **Poor labour,** etc. Cf. Horace, *Odi Profanum:* —

"Sleep hovers with extended wing
Above the roof where Labor dwells."

8. **Auld Brig.** Cf. *The Brigs of Ayr.*

16. **snaw-broo.** Melted snow.

17. **Speat.** Torrent.

22. **Gumlie jaups.** Muddy jets.

23. **a Poussin-picture.** Cf. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, V. "The Deluge," by Poussin, 248. "Truth of Water," I. Sect. V.

28. **Farmer's commendation.** Cf. *The Auld Farmer's New Year's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie*, p. 99.

"In this homely but most kindly humorous poem," says Professor Shairp, "you have the whole toiling life of a ploughman and his horse, done off in two or three touches, and the elements of what may seem a commonplace, but was to Burns a most vivid, experience, are made to live forever. For a piece of good graphic Scotch, see how he describes the sturdy old mare in the plough setting her face to the furzy braes."

29, 30. **Smithy of the Cyclops.** Cf. *Odyssey*, Bk. ix., **Yoking of Priam's Chariot.** Cf. *Iliad*, Bk. xxiv.

**25.** 1. **Burn-the-wind.** Cf. *Scotch Drink*: —

> "When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
> An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
> O rare! to see thee fizz and freath
> I' the lugget caup!
> Then Burnewin comes on like Death
> At ev'ry chaup."

Graith, *field instruments;* Fizz, *hiss;* Freath, *froth;* Lugget caup, *eared cup;* Burnewin, *blacksmith;* Chaup, *blow.*

5. **his Songs.** The secret of Burns's work as a song-writer lies in the fact that in his veins Norse and Celtic blood mingled with Saxon. His father came from Kincardineshire, or the Mearns, and his mother from Ayrshire.

The Celt powerfully affected English poetry. Mr. Arnold says: —

"It is in our poetry that the Celtic part in us has left its traces clearest. If I were asked where English poetry got these three things, — its turn for style, its turn for melancholy, and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charm of nature in a wonderfully new and vivid way, — I should answer with some doubt that it got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; with less doubt that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source; with no doubt at all that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic." — *Celtic Literature.*

18–20. **Homer surpasses all men,** etc. Cf. Arnold, *On Translating Homer:* "Homer is rapid in his movement. Homer is plain in his words and style. Homer is simple in his ideas. Homer is noble in his manner."

27. **Defoe and Richardson.** Cf. *Eighteenth Century Literature*, E. Gosse.

**26.** 6, 7. **'a gentleman that derived his patent,'** etc. Cf. *Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson*, p. 179.

9. **'red-wat-shod.'** Wat means wet, so the word is very suggestive, — wading in blood.

The Border is rich in such symbols. Jane Welsh Carlyle, writing to Thomas Carlyle's mother, says, "I, too, am coming, dear mother, and expect a share of the welcome! For though I am no son, nor even much worth as a daughter, you have a heart where there is 'coot and coom again.'"

26. **Keats.** Cf. Arnold, *Essays on Criticism*, II. Keats.

**27.** 5. **How does the Poet speak to men.** Milton says that Poetry must be *simple* — based upon our common humanity; *sensuous* — flashing truth by images; *impassioned* — moving in the sphere of the realities. The poet can appeal only to the poet in us.

"He spake not without a parable." Hebrew, Greek, Indian, and Egyptian religions all spake in parables; and poets deal in images and parables simply because there is no other vehicle for what they have to say." — COVENTRY PATMORE.

Cf. Tennyson, *The Poet's mind*, *The Poet's Song.*

10. **Novum Organum.** Cf. Bacon.

19. **his quick sure insight,** etc. It was this which enabled him to appear as much at ease among the Edinburgh gentry as among the Ayrshire peasantry.

Among other Edinburgh men of letters who welcomed Burns's poetry was Dugald Stewart, the celebrated Scotch metaphysician. He had a country home at Catrine on the Ayr, not far from Mossgiel. On one occasion he invited Burns to dine with him. It was then that he first met a real lord, — a young nobleman, Lord Daer — who had been a pupil of Dugald Stewart and was then his guest.

Dugald Stewart writes of the meeting: "Burns's manners were simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. Nothing was more remarkable than the fluency and precision and originality of his language when he spoke in company.

Cf. *Lines on meeting Lord Daer*, p. 135.

**28.** 6–8. **far subtler things than the doctrine of association,** etc. Cf. James Martineau, *Faith and Self-Surrender*, p. 12: "Knowledge bears a double fruit — a physical and a moral. It enables us to *do more*, and disposes us to *be better*. But it is not the same kind of knowledge that effects both of these results. We increase our power by knowing objects that are beneath us; our goodness by knowing those that are above us."

9–27. **'We know,'** etc. Cf. Letter, "To Mrs. Dunlop," 1789, No. clxviii.

**29.** 25–27. **all live in this earth along with him,** etc. Professor Veitch says, "We ought to be thankful to the poet for his precious susceptibilities, for thus the world came to know that there was a new link of communion between the pure soul of man and the universe of God."

**30.** 1–11. Cf. *A Winter night*, p. 94. Ourie, *cowering;* deeplairing, *deep-wading;* sprattle, *scramble;* stake, *chance.*

It is worthy of note that the idea of brotherhood with animal nature, which now is universal, began at the close of the last century with the two contemporaries, Cowper and Burns, and was carried to its finest illustration in Cowper's *Task*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, and Wordsworth's *Hart Leap Well.*

17, 18. **The very Devil,** etc. Cf. *Address to the Deil*, p. 23.

21. **aiblins.** Perhaps.

25–27. **Dr. Slop; uncle Toby.** Characters in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy.*

30. 'Indignation makes verses,' *Facit indignatio versus.*—JUVENAL.

Tennyson has combined this idea and that in l. 13–14 in *The Poet:*—

> "The poet in a golden clime was born,
> With golden stars above;
> Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love."

**31.** 9, 10. **Johnson said he loved a good hater.** Alluding to a friend, Johnson said: "He was a man to my very heart's content: . . . he was a very good hater."

At this time in his life Carlyle had not thundered forth his hatred of things hateful, although *Sartor Resartus* must have been brewing.

23, 24. Cf. Burns's poem, *Ode Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald.* The origin of Burns's indignation here was the fact that one night after he had ridden a long distance on horseback he put up at an alehouse, and while enjoying the expectation of a night of rest and comfort, "the funeral pageantry of the late Mrs. Oswald" arrived. He was turned out in the wind and snow to seek a new resting-place; and having found one at New Cumnock, his indignation gave voice to this ode. It hardly seems worthy of Carlyle's superlatives.

25. **Furies of Æschylus.** Cf. the *Trilogy* of Æschylus, of which the *Eumenides* is the third play.

26, 27. **'darkness visible.'** Cf. *Paradise Lost*, Bk. I., 63.

**32.** 4. **Scots wha hae,** etc. Cf. *Bannockburn*, p. 208.

When Burns visited Galloway he was accompanied by a fellow-exciseman Mr. Syme, who preserved a record of the journey. Mr. Syme says that after visiting Mr. Gordon at Kenmure, they passed over the moors to Gatehouse in a wild storm: "The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil. It became lowering and dark, the winds sighed hollow, the lightning gleamed, the thunders rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene. He spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall. It poured in floods upon us, and what do you think Burns was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce at Bannockburn." Two days later, when they were returning from St. Mary's Isle to Dumfries, "he was engaged in the same manner, and produced me the address of Bruce to his troops."

19, 20. Cf. *M'Pherson's Farewell*, p. 157.

An incident in Tennyson's early life, when he was wont to visit the Carlyles at Chelsea, is associated with this poem. "On one occasion when the poet stayed late, his hosts dismissed him by singing *M'Pherson's Farewell*, a tune which Carlyle called 'rough as hemp, but strong as a lion.' The rude tune and stirring words moved Tennyson so much that his 'face grew darker,' and his lips quivered." — ARTHUR WAUGH.

22, 23. **'lived a life,'** etc. Cf. the original ballad in David Herd's Collection, v. i. p. 99.

**33.** 2. **at Thebes, and in Pelops' line.** Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 99.

25, 26. Cf. *To a Mouse*, p. 68; *The Auld Farmer's New Year's Salutation to His Auld Mare Maggie*, p. 99; *The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, p. 10; *Poor Mailie's Elegy*, p. 12.

**34.** 11–24. **Tam O'Shanter,** etc. Cf., *Tam O'Shanter*, p. 172.

Mrs. Burns tells us that the poem was the work of one day. Burns had spent most of the day by the Nithside, and in the afternoon she joined him with the children. He was "crooning to himself," and she remained at a little distance, lest she disturb him; soon she was attracted by his wild gesticulations. She found him reciting aloud, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, these lines: —

> "Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
> A' plump and strapping in their teens."

"I wish you had seen him," says she, "he was in such ecstasy."

Compare Carlyle's estimate of this poem with that of Blackie, Shairp, Professor Wilson, and others. This poem has been translated into nine languages.

25, 26. **Tieck, Musäus.** German novelists of whom Carlyle wrote in his *German Literature.* Goethe writing to Carlyle, July 20, 1827, says: "Notices of the lives of 'Musaeus, Hoffman, and Richter,' prefixed to *German Romance*, are also in their kind to be commended." Carlyle writes to Goethe, April 15, 1877: "If you stand in any relation to Mr. Tieck it would give me pleasure to assure him of my esteem."

**35.** 19. **The Jolly Beggars.** While Burns and his friend Smith (Cf. *To James Smith*) were walking by Poosie-Nansie's alehouse one evening, they heard a sound of "meikle fun and jokin." On entering, they found a company of wandering vagrants assembled, —

"Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang."

The company was composed of a maimed soldier and his female companion, a Highland beggar's consort, a wandering ballad-singer, and other such characters. Burns was delighted with the scenes in which each character acted well his part, and in a few days afterwards he wrote *The Jolly Beggars.* Scott called it superior to anything of its kind in English poetry for "humorous description and nice discrimination of character." Cf. *See the Smoking Bowl before Us!* p. 58, and Note.

26, 27. **raucle carlin** (rugged crone), **wee Apollo, Son of Mars.** Characters in *The Jolly Beggars.*

The work of Burns splendidly illustrates the final dictum of Plato in *Ion*, θεῖον καὶ μὴ τεχνικόν — inspiration, not art.

**36.** 6. **Caird.** A tinker.

"My bonnie lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station."

*The Jolly Beggars.*

15. **Teniers.** David Teniers the younger, a noted Flemish landscape and portrait painter. Cf. *Century Dictionary of Names.*

20, 21. **Beggar's Bush.** A comedy by Fletcher and others, produced at Court 1622. **Beggar's Opera.** Opera by J. Gay, produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1728. It was a satire on the effeminate style introduced from Italy. Cf. *Century Dictionary of Names.*

**37.** 6–10. **Songs of Burns,** etc. Cf. Shairp, *Aspects of Poetry*, Scottish Song and Burns.

Charles Kingsley, in speaking of the later Scottish song-writers, says: "They seldom really sing; their verses want the unconscious lilt and flash of their old models; they will hardly go (the true test of song) without music — the true test, we say again, of a song. Who needs music, however fitting and beautiful, to the *Flowers of the Forest*, or to *Auld Lang Syne?*"

"All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song; as if the rest were but wrappings and hulls! The primal throb of us; of us and of all things. The Greeks fabled of Sphere-Harmonies: it was the feeling they had of the inner structure of Nature; that the Soul of all her voices and utterances was perfect music. Poetry therefore we will call *Musical Thought.* The Poet is he who *thinks* in that manner. See deep enough and you will see musically." — CARLYLE, *The Hero as Poet.*

13. **Ossorius.** Once called the Cicero of Portugal.

29. **and in themselves are music.** The essential difference between the songs of Burns and the songs of Tennyson — each perfect after its kind — is that the one is an inspiration, the other an art. If we compare the songs in the *Princess* with those of Burns, we shall see the distinction of kind clearly marked. Tennyson is the artist who consciously selects his subjects for definite purposes, fashions and refashions the verse which depends largely for its effectiveness upon what Mr. Stedman calls "the obvious repetends and singing bars, the stanzaic effect, the use of open vowel sounds and other matters instinctive with song-makers."

**38**. 23–27. Cf. *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*, p. 163; *To Mary in Heaven*, p. 164; *Auld Lang Syne*, p. 159; *Bannockburn*, p. 208.

Mr. A. T. Quiller Couch wonders why Scotsmen lavish their enthusiasm on Burns rather than on Scott. He says: "All over the world — and all under it, too, when their time comes — Scotsmen are preparing after-dinner speeches about Burns. . . . Is it the *homeliness* of Burns that appeals to them as a wandering race? Is it because in farthest exile a line of Burns takes their hearts straight back to Scotland?" I think every Scot would answer this question with a very emphatic *Ay, Sir!* and wonder that any one — even an Englishman — should be in doubt upon the subject.

**39.** 3. **our Fletcher's.** Andrew Fletcher. Why does Carlyle use the pronoun "our"?

8–17. **His Songs,** etc.

John Stuart Blackie, in advocating the use of Scotch songs in the public meetings of Scotland, says: "If choice were to be made between classical education and Scottish song, I would say at once, burn Homer, burn Aristotle, fling Thucydides into the sea; but let us by all means on our Scottish hills and by our Scottish streams have *Highland Mary*, *Auld Lang Syne*, and *Scots Wha hae wi' Wallace Bled*."

"Not Latimer, not Luther, struck more telling blows against false theology than did the brave singer. The Confession of Augsburg, The Declaration of Independence, the French Rights of Man, are not more weighty documents in the history of freedom than the songs of Burns." — EMERSON.

18–28. **In another point of view,** etc. It is of importance that we recognize the fact that in Burns the two literary estates, English and Scottish, were united. Until his time there was a sharp distinction between Scottish and English literature; but after him the literature of the two countries became one, both in nature and in name. This was but natural, when we consider that something of the original impulse which moved Burns's genius was English.

When the riches of this noble Scottish house, and of that sister house of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, awaited union in a royal heir, there came a peasant lad from the "auld clay biggin'" in Ayrshire, who, with the simple and graceful dignity of one of nature's noblemen, claimed his own, and there was added a new hereditary peer to the House of Fame.

**40.** 1. **Our Grays and Glovers.** Cf. E. Gosse, *Eighteenth Century Literature.*

17. **John Boston.** This should be Thomas Boston.

24, 25. **Lord Kames.** Author of *Elements of Criticism.*

26. **Hume, Robertson, Smith.** Cf. *Century Cyclopedia of Names* for the work of the Philosopher, the Historian, the Political Economist.

**41.** 4. **our culture,** etc.

"Burns followed and furthered the work of Ramsay and Fergusson in turning our literature from Continental themes and so-called classical treatment of them to Scottish scenery and music, and the modes of Scottish life." — VEITCH.

"To what other man was it ever given so to transfigure the country of his birth and love? Every bud and flower, every hill and dale and river, whisper and repeat his name." — GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

16–23. **Never, perhaps, was there a class,** etc.

"At this time," says Professor Shairp, "there was a set of literary men in Edinburgh who as to national feeling were entirely colorless, — Scotchmen in nothing except their dwelling-place. The thing they most dreaded was to be convicted of a Scotticism. Among these learned cosmopolitans in walked Burns, who, with the instinct of genius, chose for his subject that Scottish life which they ignored, and for his vehicle that vernacular which they despised; and who, touching the springs of long-forgotten emotions, brought back on the hearts of his countrymen a tide of patriotic feeling to which they had long been strangers."

Lockhart says : —

"Burns revived Scottish nationality, which was falling asleep on the graves of the Stuarts."

**42.** 8, 9. **'Doctrine of Rent.'** Cf. Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 1817. De Quincey in his *Logic of Political Economy*, reviews Ricardo's "Doctrine."

**'Natural History of Religion.'** Probably an allusion to the works of James Douglas of Cavers, which were so popular in the early years of the century.

27, 28. **'a tide of Scottish Prejudice.'** *Cf. Letter* lviii. To Dr. Moore.

In a letter to Mrs. Dunlop the poet writes : —

"The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it my most exalted ambition."

"The first two books I ever read in private, which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were *The Life of Hannibal* and *The History of William Wallace.* Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier ; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest."

**43.** 11–20. **A wish (I mind its power).** Cf. *Epistle to Mrs. Scott, Guidwife of Wauchope House*, p. 142.

The contrast between Burns and Carlyle is very great. Burns was always loving the good ; Carlyle, at least in later life, was always hating the bad. The world loves Burns ; it fears Carlyle. Mr. Henry Drummond says that in youth, after reading Carlyle, he felt as though he had been whipped.

25–29. **These Poems,** etc.

"In his poems we apprehend is to be found a truer history than any anecdote can supply of the things which happened to himself, and, moreover, of the most notable things which went on in Scotland between 1759 and 1796." — CHARLES KINGSLEY.

**44.** 17–22. **there is but one era,** etc. The most natural divisions into which Burns's work may be divided are 1773–1786 and 1787–1796. In the first period, which closed with the publication of the first edition of his poems, we have the early love-songs, epistles, satires, and poems humorous and descriptive relating to rural life and manners. These are for the most part in the native Scottish dialect, and are simple, picturesque, and impassioned. In the second period we have mostly songs based upon the early minstrelsy. The occasion of many of these was the publication of Johnson's *Museum*, a collection of the best Scottish songs, and later a similar publication by Thomson. To these two works Burns was a frequent contributor.

24–30. **he never attains,** etc. Carlyle here deserves the following censure of Mr. Ernest Rhys, who says: "It has been the common responsibility of his biographers to point out how differently he might have lived, how much more wisely he might have ordered his days. More wisely, perhaps, but not so well. There is a diviner economy in these things than we have come to allow."

**45.** 3–19. **Another and far meaner ambition,** etc. What do you say to this in the light of Burns's biography?

**46.** 9. **clay soil of Mossgiel.** "The house is very small, consisting of only two rooms, a but and a ben, as they are called in Scotland. Over these, reached by a trap stair, is a small garret, in which Robert and his brother used to sleep. Thither, when he returned from his day's work, the poet used to retire, and seat himself at a small deal table, lighted by a narrow skylight in the roof, to transcribe the verses which he had composed in the fields. His favorite time for composition was at the plough." Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister, after the publication of the poems, used to say that when the boys had gone to the fields she would climb to the little room, and search the table-drawer for the verses.

If we wish to see what obstacles lay in the way of the young farmer, we have only to visit this place. The buildings are not attractive in themselves, but the situation is somewhat picturesque. Not far away is the field where he turned down the daisy, and that other field where the "wee cow'rin tim'rous beastie" was so unceremoniously turned out of house and home. *Cf.* W. Jolly, *Burns at Mossgiel.*

> "Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
> Who never spent the darksome hours
> Weeping and watching for the morrow,
> He knows you not, ye unseen Powers."
> GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meister.*

22. **journey to Edinburgh.** Burns set out for the metropolis on the 27th of November, and his journey was a sort of triumphal progress. The farmers in the vicinity of Covington, Lanarkshire, had agreed to signal his arrival with a white flag hung from a pitchfork on a corn-stack. As it was hoisted, they came running from all directions to see the author of the new volume of poems. They met him at a late dinner, when he increased their admiration for him by his ready wit and gentle humor. He reached Edinburgh on the 28th, and went to live with an old crony at Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket.

28–31. **His father,** etc. William Burness was a type of the sober, industrious, conscientious Scotch peasant; clear-headed and warm-hearted, and inclined to be somewhat stern.

This tribute to him is merited by all that we know of his life of love and devotion: —

> "The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
> The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
> The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
> For e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side."

The ancestors of William Burness were men of character, education, and position; they were deeply religious and nobly patriotic, — stanch Jacobites. They were tenant-farmers of George Keith, the Earl Mareschal of Scotland. They were natives of Kinkardineshire, or the Mearns; and in 1715 they joined the Mar men in the Jacobite rising.

Of his father's style Carlyle writes: "None of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from the untutored soul, full of metaphor, though he knew not what metaphor was, with all manner of potent words which he appropriated and applied with surprising accuracy. In anger he had no need of oaths."

Once a neighbor met James Carlyle on a stormy morning and said, "Here's a fearful day, James," which drew forth this response, "Man, it's a' that; it's roaring doon our glen like the cannon o' Quebec."

There is no doubt that Carlyle inherited much of his early style from his father. One critic, who attributes his later peculiarities to his study of German, says: "He wrestled so long with Jean Paul, to master his spirit, that, like Jacob of old, his thigh has been put out, and he has halted in his English ever since."

"Carlyle deliberately says that if he had been asked whether his father or Robert Burns had the finest intellect, he could not have answered. Carlyle's style, which has been so much wondered at, was learnt in the Annandale farmhouse; and beyond the intellect there was an inflexible integrity in word and deed, which Carlyle honored above all human qualities. The aspect in which he regarded human life, the unalterable conviction that justice and truth are the only bases on which successful conduct, either private or public, can be safely rested, he had derived from his father, and it was the root of all that was great in himself." — J. A. FROUDE, *Reminiscences*, "James Carlyle."

The close touch of realities which he gained in this home accounts for much of the scorn of shams which appears, perhaps too often, in his later work.

He writes to Miss Welsh, when he was acting as tutor to Charles Buller at Kinnaird in Perthshire: "I see something of fashionable people here, and truly to my plebeian conception there is not a more futile class of persons on the face of the earth. There is something in the life of a sturdy peasant toiling from sun to sun for a plump wife and six eating children; but as for the Lady Jerseys and the Lord Petershams, peace be with them."

Cf. Burns, *To Dr. Blacklock*, p. 166.

"I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yoursels my heart right proud is —
I need na vaunt,
But I'll sned besoms — thraw saugh woodies,
Before they want.

But to conclude my silly rhyme,
(I'm scant o' verse, and scant o' time,)
To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life."

Cf. "Domsie," in Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, or *A Window in Thrums* and *Margaret Ogilvy*, by Barrie.

"I know of no way," says Phillips Brooks, "in which poetry can make our lives more true than by the power that it has to help us to appreciate other men's endeavors after worthy things. It is a noble and a beautiful thing to feel ourselves outgrowing our contempts, to recognize each day that something which we have been despising as mean and poor is high and pure and rich in worth and beauty." — *Poetry*.

"To be able to write! Throughout Mr. Ogilvy's life, save when he was about one and twenty, this had seemed the great thing; and he ever approached the thought reverently, as if it were a maid of more than mortal purity. And it is so; and because he knew this she let him see her face, which shall ever be hidden from those who look not for the soul, and to help him nearer to her came assistance in strange guise, the loss of loved ones, dolour unutterable. . . . Once or twice in a long life she touched his fingers, and a heavenly spark was lit, for he had risen higher than himself, and that is literature." — J. M. BARRIE, *Sentimental Tommy*, chapter xxxvi.

Dr. Martineau says: "The soul grows godlike, not by its downward gaze at inferior nature, but by its uplifted look at thought and goodness greater than its own."

"Some envious power," says John Stuart Blackie, "assigned to Scotsmen a rugged plot of earth on the chilly edge of the world. But strong hearts, subtlety of thought, unbending wills, untiring hands, and a spark of the fire divine which Prometheus brought from heaven to kindle wise invention, — these are the glorious fairies' gifts that the blessed ones, the givers of all good things, have bestowed on Caledonia."

**47.** 27, 28. **'Let us worship God.'** Cf. *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, p. 81.

Of the inception of this poem Gilbert Burns says: "Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent, sober head of a family, introducing family worship." Such pictures as this from Carlyle's early work are common, but they are almost entirely absent from his later work. This is lurid with the light of love; later his pictures are lurid with scorn.

**48.** 18; 19. **in glory and in joy.** Cf. Wordsworth, *Resolution and Independence*.

**49.** 26–31. **Surely such lessons,** etc. Cf. J. M. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy*.

**50.** 2–7. **Had Burns continued to learn,** etc. Wordsworth says: "It is probable that Burns would have proved a still greater poet, if, by strength of reason, he could have controlled the propensities which his sensibility engendered, but he would have been a poet of a different class; and certain it is, had that desirable restraint been early established, many peculiar beauties which enrich his verses could never have existed, and many accessory influences, which contribute greatly to their effects, would have been wanting."

Our language does not afford a more temperate, gracious, and wise bit of criticism on the genius and character of Burns.

"We know his worst sins," says Christopher North, "but we cannot know his sorrows. The war between the spirit and the flesh often raged in his nature, as in that of the best of beings who are made, and no Christian without humblest self-abasement will ever read *A Bard's Epitaph*."

"The sins of the dead poet should not be discussed, but forgotten. But the good, the things that are well done, what is beautiful and loving, should be brought into clearer and clearer light. This is a practical matter; that is, the matter which helps and kindles mankind towards the things that are worthy of worship — which is the proper definition of the practical." — Stopford Brooke.

"Nothing less intense than the central fires of the heart can open clefts in the rocky structure of society, and project the precious metals of true sentiment through its mass." — James Martineau.

12, 13. **unprofitable warfare.** Here Carlyle is very far from correct.

Charles Kingsley says: "Consider what contradiction between faith and practice must have met the eyes of the man before he could write with the same pen — and one as honestly as the other — *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *Holy Willie's Prayer*. In these poems of his is to be found a truer history than any anecdote can supply of the things which happened to himself, and of the most notable things that went on in Scotland between 1759 and 1796."

This assertion of Carlyle's seems strange when set against the fundamental activity of his own life, — warfare against the cant and hypocrisy of Church and State. Cf. *Chartism* and *Latter-day Pamphlets*.

16. **scruples about Religion.** It has often been insinuated, if not openly asserted, that Burns was not a religious man; but the sympathetic reader of his poetry can find no ground for such

implication, for he sees that it is charged with the *spirit* of our common religious nature. Professor Blackie rightly says: "Burns was not only a Scotsman breathing the religious atmosphere of the west, and brought up with pious care in a religious family, but he was personally a religious man to a degree which the cursory reader of his works would never suspect." "No poet since the psalmist of Israel," says Andrew Lang, "ever gave the world more assurance of a man."

Sir Henry Taylor once said that Carlyle was a Calvinist who had lost his creed.

**51.** 6–8. **The blackest desperation,** etc. This was due to the trouble with the Armours; as a consequence, he had decided to go to Jamaica. Cf. *Select Poems of Robert Burns*, A. J. George, p. 287–290; also Archibald Munro, *The Story of Burns and Highland Mary.*

11, 12. **'hungry Ruin had me in the wind.'** Cf. *Letter* lviii. To Dr. Moore.

15–21. **while the 'gloomy night is gath'ring fast.'** Cf. *Farewell to the Banks of Ayr*, p. 130.

Of this poem Burns says: "My chest was on the road for Greenock, and I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, —

'The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,'

when a letter from Dr. Blacklock opened new prospects to my poetic ambition." This new prospect was a second edition of his poems, and by it he was deterred from the voyage to Jamaica. Cf. *To Dr. Blacklock*, p. 166.

When Highland Mary went to her home to prepare for her coming marriage with Burns, she carried with her two very precious books, — the two-volume Bible inscribed by the poet, and a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems.

Cf. *Will Ye go to the Indies, My Mary*, p. 131; *Prayer for Mary*, p. 132; *Highland Lassie O*, p. 133; *To Mary in Heaven*, p. 164; and *Highland Mary*, p. 195.

Mr. Munro, in his *Story of Burns and Highland Mary*, tells us that on one occasion the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, who lived near Alloway Bridge, was visited by two strangers, who seemed very much interested in Burns's poetry. They inquired for the various editions of his work, and the elder of the two asked permission to read aloud a poem which interested him very much. He then read, or intoned, *To Mary in Heaven*, at the conclusion of which all were in tears. Mrs. Begg desired to know the reader's name, when his companion informed her that he desired to travel incognito. But when, on departing, they reached the door, the reader took the aged lady's hand, and said: "Mrs. Begg, I have reasons for withholding my name on certain occasions; and I trust that, so far as you are concerned, my name may remain a secret here for a few days at least. To the sister of immortal Burns I have now the honor and pleasure of confiding my name — Alfred Tennyson."

29, 30. **Burns's appearance among the sages,** etc. This introduces us to what may be called the second period of his literary work. It was indeed a critical time for a young man who had never been beyond the limits of Ayrshire; but the native strength and beauty of his simple and graceful manner was everywhere apparent, and enabled him to stand firm in the midst of the whirl of fashionable entertainment, and the convivialities of tavern life.

Mrs. Alice Cockburn, the gifted author of *I've Seen the Smiling of Fortune Beguiling*, then very aged, wrote of Burns's arrival: "The town is at present all agog with the Ploughman Poet, who receives adulation with native dignity."

**53.** 12. **Mr. Walker's personal interviews.** Cf. *Select Poems of Robert Burns* (George), Note, p. 288.

**55.** 24–28. **The Conduct of Burns.** Mr. James T. Fields compares Burns with our own Hawthorne in personal appearance, and in the general impression made by his ease and grace of manner. He says: "I remember to have heard, in the literary circles of Great Britain, that since Burns no author had appeared there with a finer face than Hawthorne's. Old Mrs. Basil

Montague told me, many years ago, that she sat next to Burns at dinner when he appeared in society in the first flush of his fame, after the Edinburgh Edition of his poems had been published. She said among other things that, although the company consisted of some of the best bred men in England, Burns seemed to her the most perfect gentleman among them. She noticed particularly his genuine grace and deferential manner toward women."

Dugald Stewart says: "The attentions he received from all ranks and descriptions of persons would have turned any head but his own."

**56.** 28–30. **The Edinburgh learned**, etc. Of the condition of things in Edinburgh in Burns's time Mr. Alexander Smith says: "The literary society of the time was exotic, like the French lily or the English rose. For a generation and more the Scottish philosophers, historians, and poets had brought their epigram from France as they brought their claret, and their humour from England as they brought their parliamentary intelligence."

30. **The good old Blacklock.** Dr. Blacklock, the Edinburgh Mæcenas, was the first of the literary friends of the poet. It was at his suggestion that the second edition of the poems was issued. His love and esteem were always of the greatest assistance to Burns. His simple and sweet Christian nature made him kindly with his kind, and he viewed the frailties of his fellow-mortals with tenderness and sympathy. He is known in Scotland as the "discoverer of Robert Burns."

**57.** 26, 27. **Excise and Farm scheme.** He had enjoyed and suffered in Edinburgh. The flattery and the feasting, the smiles and the speeches, were rated at their true worth. "I have formed many intimacies and friendships here," he says, "but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles." The truth of these words was now to be tested. He began to think of home and of a settled purpose in life, now that Edinburgh had done her best, — a best which could not satisfy this proud-spirited peasant. He must have a life of love, even though it be in an humble cottage.

In the spring of 1788 Burns left Edinburgh, and in March leased the farm at Ellisland, making "a poet's, not a farmer's, choice."

Compare this with Carlyle's scheme at Craigenputtoch.

**58.** 24, 25. **With two good and wise actions.** After looking to the wants of his mother, he married Jean Armour, although the earlier marriage having been declared null and void he was under no legal obligation to return to her; but Burns was not the base man he had been represented to be, and the action, so greatly to his credit, brought peace of mind and gladness of heart.

"My father put me frae his door,
  My friends they hae disown'd me a';
But I hae ane will take my part —
  The bonnie lad that's far awa'."

Cf. *I love my Jean*, p. 156.

"The marriage," says Professor Blackie, "was the most honorable and wise act in the life of a great genius, always remarkable for honor, not always for wisdom."

It is interesting to note here that when Carlyle was struggling into literary fame in Edinburgh in 1821, and had earned something by his pen, the first use of the money was to send his father a pair of spectacles, and to his mother "a little sovereign to keep the fiend out of her hussif." Cf. J. M. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy*, last chapter.

**60.** 2–5. **These men,** etc. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, alluding to this period, says: "Yes, at that moment every man in Scotland, you may say, was tempting him. The good God only knows how he struggled." — *Address at the Burns Centenary*, Boston, 1896.

**61. he comes in collision with certain official superiors.** On one occasion, when Exciseman, Burns captured a smuggling craft in the Solway, and sent four carronades which he found in her to the French Government, they were stopped at Dover, and he was reprimanded for lack of patriotism. Cf. *The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman*, p. 194.

**63.** 28, 29. **'thoughtless follies,'** etc. Cf. *The Bard's Epitaph*, p. 103.

**64.** 10. **the crisis of Burns's life.** The year at Ellisland, 1791, was the saddest in the life of our poet. It was now demonstrated that in selecting this place he had made "a poet's, not a farmer's, choice." His crops did not yield him any adequate return for the money he had expended. He had used the proceeds remaining from the sale of the second edition of his poems. In August he decided to sell the crops and give up the lease, and in November the business was wound up.

"It is not without deep regret," says Shairp, "that even now we think of Burns's departure from this beautiful spot. If there was any position on earth in which he could have been happy and fulfilled his genius, it would have been on such a farm."

He moved to a house in Mill Hole Brae (now Burns Street), near the lower end of Bank Vennel in Dumfries. Here the society was not conducive to regular habits, either of business or art. He was thrown into company with an idle set, much to the injury of his reputation among the steady-going peasantry.

"Like litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,
The canticles of love and woe."

EMERSON.

**65.** 1–5. **So the milder third gate was open,** etc. The pathos of these last days at Dumfries is very intense. There is no sadder picture in history than that of this sweet soul crushed under the burden too heavy for it to sustain, and yielding its divine fragrance to the world.

"'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you,

> Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
> And all at once they leave you, and you know them;
> We are so fooled, so cheated!"

Of his death on the 21st of July, 1796, Alexander Smith writes: —

"Mighty is the hallowing of death to all — to him more than to most. Farmer no longer, exciseman no longer, subject no longer to criticism, to misrepresentation, to the malevolence of mean natures and evil tongues, he lay there, the great poet of his country, dead too early for himself and for it. He had passed from the judgment of Dumfries, and made his appeal to Time."

> "Dead, who had served his time,
> Was one of the people's kings,
> Had labour'd in lifting them out of slime,
> And showing them, souls have wings."
>
> TENNYSON.

"Death I account always as a great deliverance, a dark Door into Peace, into everlasting Hope. Had not a God made this world, and made Death too, it were an insupportable place." — CARLYLE to Erskine of Linlathen.

**66.** 21–24. **Still less,** etc. Alluding to the fact that so many in Burns's time recognized him, and valued him at his true worth, Hawthorne says: —

"It is far easier to know and honor a poet when his fame has taken shape in the spotlessness of marble, than when the actual man comes staggering before you besmeared with the sordid stains of his daily life. For my part, I chiefly wonder that his recognition dawned so brightly while he was yet living. There must have been something very grand in his immediate presence, some strangely impressive characteristic in his natural behavior, to have caused him to seem like a demigod so soon."

> "An artist, sir, should rest in art,
> And waive a little of his claim;
> To have the deep poetic heart
> Is more than all poetic fame."
>
> TENNYSON.

**68.** 6. **Let us pity and forgive them.** "We cease to be savage and caustic when we are acquainted with the inner existence of a man; for the relentlessness of satire is only possible to those who neither sympathize nor comprehend." — EDMUND GOSSE.

**73.** 10–18. **He has no religion,** etc. Cf. *A Prayer*, p. 9. John Stuart Blackie says of this poem: "The man who could feel and write thus was not far from the best piety of the Psalms of David."

"It is the religious element in Burns that fuses and kindles all the rest, that makes him the voice of the race at *its* best when he is at *his* best." — E. CHARLTON BLACK.

"With shattering ire and withering mirth
He smote each worthless claim to worth,
The barren fig-tree cumbering earth
He would not spare.
Through ancient lies of proudest birth
He drove his share."

WILLIAM WATSON.

Rev. Charles Rogers, the author of *A Century of Scottish Life*, says: "In 1856 I spent an afternoon with Mrs. Begg, the poet's sister. She said that Robert took their father's place in conducting household worship, and that he instructed her in the Shorter Catechism. "He was a father to me," said Mrs. Begg, "and my knowledge of the Scriptures in my youth I derived from his teaching."

"Burns was distinctly and definitely a religious man, else he could never have written much that he did." — EDWARD EVERETT HALE.

Cf. R. H. HUTTON, *Modern Guides to Thought in Matters of Faith*, 'Carlyle,' for a view of Carlyle's religion.

Carlyle came naturally by his independence in religious matters. His father stood by the "auld Buke," and insisted that he should be allowed to interpret it for himself. On one occasion the clergyman gave a somewhat luminous description of the terrors of the last judgment; and when he had ceased, James Carlyle faced him before the congregation with these words: —

"Ay, ye may thump and stare till yer een start fra their sockets, but you'll na gar me believe such stuff as that."

**76.** 18. **they had a message to deliver.** Carlyle's analysis of Byron's character is one of the very best to be found in criticism; but the treatment of that of Burns from this point to page 78, line 7, is not in his best temper. A Scot's judgment of another Scot in matters of religion is not always just.

"We are near the century of Burns's death, and his fame stands beyond question higher than ever; and a fame, let us remember, not of the coteries, but, so to speak, of the equator." — ERNEST RHYS.

"High Duchesses, and ostlers of inns, gather round the Scottish rustic, Burns: — a strange feeling dwelling in each that they never heard a man like this; that, on the whole, this is the man! . . . Do not we feel it so? But now, Dilettantism, Scepticism, Triviality, and all that sorrowful brood, cast out of us, — as by God's blessing they shall one day be; were faith in the shows of things entirely swept out, replaced by clear faith in the *things*, so that a man acted on the impulse of that only, and counted the other non-extant; what a new livelier feeling towards this Burns were it!" — CARLYLE. *The Hero as Poet.*

**78.** 20–23. **It decides like a court of law,** etc. In this noble passage Carlyle gives a history of what criticism had been, and a prophecy of what it would be. It was against this judicial criticism that Wordsworth and Coleridge did battle; the one in *The Prefaces*, and the other in the *Biographia Literaria.* Professor Dowden says that the function assumed by these ministers of literature (the critics) resembles that of a magistrate on the bench. Before this judge the offender was brought on the charge of disturbing the peace, and if he addressed the court in an unknown tongue he was at once sentenced.

"Jeffrey judged before he interpreted. His quick glance over superficies led him to exaggerate the defects of great poets, while their genius merely hummed in his ears." — E. P. WHIPPLE.

Goethe, Sainte-Beuve, and Matthew Arnold have been distinguished for their insistence upon and application of the principles for which Carlyle ever pleads. "The form of this world passes," said Goethe, "and I would fain occupy myself with that only which constitutes abiding relations." "The first consideration for us," says Sainte-Beuve, "is not whether we are amused and pleased by a work of art or mind, but ought we to be amused, are we right in being moved by it?" "Criticism," says Arnold, "is a *disinterested* endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."

Cf. Wordsworth's *Prefaces* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, A. J. George, Ed.

**79.** 9, 10. **Ramsgate.** A seaport, Kent, England.

**Isle of Dogs.** A peninsula on the Thames.

12. **we are not required to plead for Burns.** Emerson says: —

"Every man's, every boy's and girl's head carries snatches of Burns's songs, and they say them by heart; and what is strangest of all, never learned them from a book, but from mouth to mouth. The wind whispers them, the birds whistle them, the corn, barley, and bulrushes hoarsely rustle them; nay, the music-boxes of Geneva are framed and toothed to play them, the hand-organs of the Savoyards in all cities repeat them, and the chimes of bells ring them in spires. They are the property and solace of mankind."

When Carlyle wrote this essay he little thought that as Burns would become recognized as the greatest poet of his native land, so he would be considered Scotland's greatest man of letters.

Burns never forsook the fireside of the cottager; and it is there he is loved, and there his immortality is secure. While Carlyle did much to exalt the conception of simple, homely worth, he never succeeded in gaining the love and devotion of the peasantry.

"Great! for he spoke and the people heard,
And his eloquence caught like a flame
From zone to zone of the world, till his Word
Had won him a noble name.

Noble! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
  Thro' palace and cottage door,
For he touched on the whole sad planet of man,
  The kings and the rich and the poor."

TENNYSON.

16–25. **While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on,** etc. This concluding passage reminds us of that of Shairp, in his *Wordsworth, the Man and the Poet* (Studies in Poetry and Philosophy). "What earth's far-off, lonely mountains do for the plains and the cities, that Wordsworth has done and will do for literature, and through literature for society; sending down great rivers of higher touch, fresh, purifying winds of feeling, to those who least dream from what quarter they come."

Lord Roseberry, in his speech on the unveiling of the Burns statue at Paisley, Sept. 26, 1896, said: —

"I think, indeed, that the greatest of the many debts that we Scotchmen of the latter nineteenth century owe to Burns is that he keeps our enthusiasm alive. It is to him that we owe our perennial supply, as distinguished from gusts and flashes of this precious quality. He never fails us; we rally regularly and constantly to his summons and his shrine; his lute awakens our romance, and charms the sunless spirits of darkness; his is the influence that maintains an abiding glow in our dour character. To Burns we owe it that we canny, long-headed Scots do not stagnate into prose."

"The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay;
Empires dissolve and peoples disappear:
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;
The swords of Cæsars, they are less than rust:
The poet doth remain."

W. WATSON.

Of this essay, Froude says: "It is one of the very best of his essays, and was composed with an evidently peculiar interest, because the outward circumstances of Burns's life, his origin, his early surroundings, his situation as a man of genius born in a farm-house not many miles distant, among the same people and the same associations as were so familiar to himself, could not fail to make him think fair of himself while he was writing about his countryman."

"The essay on Burns," says Richard Garnett, "is the very voice of Scotland, expressive of all her passionate love and tragic sorrow for her darling son. It has paragraphs of massy gold, capable of being beaten out into volumes, as indeed they have been. Unlike some of Carlyle's essays, it is by no means open to the charge of mysticism, but is distinguished by the soundest good sense."

Carlyle's rule as to style is well illustrated in this essay, though he often violated it in his later work: "Learn, so far as possible, to be intelligible and transparent, — no notice taken of your style, but solely of what you express by it: this is your clear rule."

"Carlyle in these first essays," says Lowell, "already shows the influence of his master, Goethe, the most widely receptive of critics. The remarkable feature of Carlyle's criticism is the sleuth-hound instinct with which he presses on to the *matter* of his theme, never turned aside by a false scent, regardless of the outward beauty of form, in his hunger after the intellectual nourishment which it may hide. Everything that Carlyle wrote during this first period thrills with the purest appreciation of whatever is brave and beautiful in human nature."

In 1827 Goethe said to Eckermann; "Carlyle is a moral force of great significance. He has a great future before him, and indeed one can see no end to all that he will do and effect by his influence."

"The Essay on Burns," says Mr. John Morley, "had the same effect on us at Oxford as had Cardinal Newman's sermons. It was not till twenty-five years after the essay was published that it began to exert the great formative opinion of which my generation was so interested a witness. Carlyle, though not a great poet in form, yet had a poetic grandeur and a fervid sublimity of imagination, which enabled him to do some of the things which great poets do."

# CARLYLE'S SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY.

Our grand maxim of supply and demand. Living misery and posthumous glory. The character of Burns a theme that cannot easily become exhausted. His biographers. Perfection in biography. (p. 5.) Burns one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century: an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen. His hard and most disadvantageous conditions. Not merely as a Poet, but as a Man, that he chiefly interests and affects us. His life a deeper tragedy than any brawling Napoleon's. His heart, erring and at length broken, full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things. The peasant poet bears himself among the low, with whom his lot is cast, like a king in exile. (11.) His writings but a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him, yet of a quality enduring as the English tongue. He wrote, not from hearsay, but from sight and actual experience. This, easy as it looks, the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with. Byron, heartily as he detested insincerity, far enough from faultless. No poet of Burns's susceptibility from first to last so totally free from affectation. Some of his Letters, however, by no means deserve this praise. His singular power of making all subjects, even the most homely, interesting. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place. Every genius an impossibility till he appears. (21.) Burns's rugged, earnest truth, yet tenderness and sweet native grace. His clear, graphic, 'descriptive touches,' and piercing emphasis of thought. Professor Stewart's testimony to Burns's intellectual vigor. A deeper insight than any 'doctrine of association.' In the Poetry of

Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling. Loving indignation and *good* hatred: *Scots wha hae: Macpherson's Farewell*: sunny, buoyant floods of humor. (33.) Imperfections of Burns's poetry: *Tam o'Shanter*, not a true poem so much as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the *Jolly Beggars*, the most complete and perfect as a poetical composition. His Songs the most truly inspired and most deeply felt of all his poems. His influence on the hearts and literature of his country: literary patriotism. (42.) Burns's acted works even more interesting than his written ones: and these too, alas, but a fragment: his passionate youth never passed into clear and steadfast manhood. The only true happiness of a man: often it is the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it: Burns and Byron. Burns's hard-worked, yet happy boyhood: his estimable parents. Early dissipations. In necessity and obedience a man should find his highest freedom. (49.) Religious quarrels and scepticisms. Faithlessness: exile and blackest desperation. Invited to Edinburgh: a Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of Literature. Sir Walter Scott's reminiscence of an interview with Burns. Burns's calm manly bearing amongst the Edinburgh aristocracy. His bitter feeling of his own indigence. By the great he is treated in the customary fashion; and each party goes his several way. (57) What Burns was next to do, or to avoid: his Excise-and-Farm Scheme not an unreasonable one: no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. Good beginnings. Patrons of genius and picturesque tourists: their moral rottenness, by which he became infected, gradually eat out the heart of his life. Meteors of French politics rise before him, but they are not *his* stars. Calumny is busy with him. The little, great-folk of Dumfries: Burns's desolation. In his destitution and degradation one act of self-devotedness still open to him: not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country. The crisis of his life: death. (65.) Little effectual help could perhaps have been rendered to Burns; patronage twice cursed: many a poet has been poorer, none prouder. And yet much might have been done to have made his humble atmosphere more genial. Little Babylons and Babylonians: let us go and *do otherwise.* The market-price of Wisdom. Not in the power of *any* mere external circumstances to ruin the mind of a man. The errors of Burns to be mourned over, rather than blamed. The great want of his life was the great want of his age, a true faith in religion and a singleness and unselfishness of aim. (73.) Poetry, as Burns could and ought to have followed it, is but another form of wisdom, of religion. For his culture as a Poet, poverty and much suffering for a season were absolutely advantageous. To divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets an ill-starred attempt. Byron, rich in worldly means and honors, no whit happier than Burns in his poverty and worldly degradation: they had a message from on High to deliver, which could leave them no rest while it remained unaccomplished. Death and the rest of the grave: a stern moral, *twice* told us in our own time. The world habitually unjust in its judgments of such men. With men of right feeling anywhere, there will be no need to plead for Burns: in pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts. (79.)

1, What is their specific significance.

What is their general meaning.

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